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Recollections of a Humourist

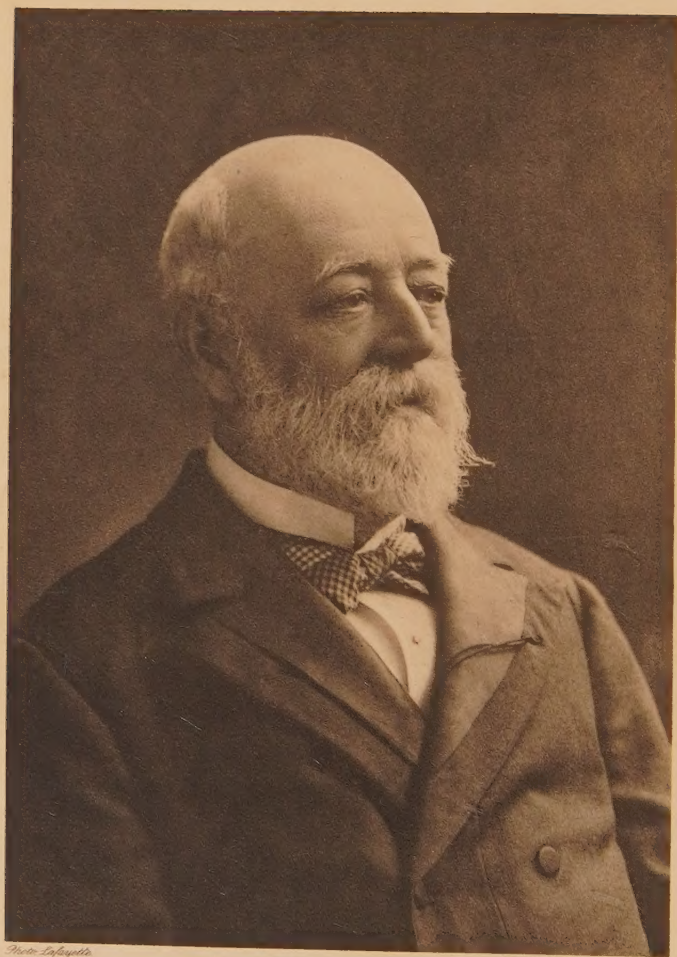


Photo. Lafayette

Always,
Yours sincerely
Arthur W. Beckell.

Recollections of a Humourist

Grave and Gay

By

Arthur William à Beckett

For more than twenty years

ASSISTANT EDITOR of *Punch*.

LONDON: SIR ISAAC PITMAN & SONS, LTD.

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To

S. F. à B.

P. A. F. W. à B.

and

W. H. F. à B.

This

Book of Recollections is affectionately dedicated

by

The Author.

PREFACE

THE title-page of this work will show that, in giving my recollections, I claim to be grave or gay as the humour seizes me.

I describe myself as a humourist, as that was my recognised calling when I had the honour to be for more than twenty years Assistant Editor of *Punch*.

During my life I have had the opportunity of coming across all sorts and conditions of men.

I trust that my experiences will prove a source of amusement, and even of instruction, to those kind enough to follow them. If unamusing and uninstructional pages are discovered, they may be set down, with the author's sanction, as the grave part of the volume.

It has been a great delight to me to write this book. I venture to pray that it will give equal pleasure to those who read it.

For the rest, whatever the exact nature of the recollections may prove to be, I cannot but trust that there is nothing in them to deprive me of the title I wish always to retain of a good—in every sense of the word—humourist.

ARTHUR WILLIAM À BECKETT.

Garrick Club
1907.

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Recollections of a Humourist

CHAPTER I

THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH

A Definition of a Humourist—The Friends of Gilbert Abbott à Beckett—The Passport of the Shilling—The Earliest Staff of *Punch*—"Dicky" Doyle and his Nephew Conan—Charles Dickens as a Dramatist—School Days in Kensington—Michael William Balfe—The Dress Rehearsal of "Satanella"—The Angel of Midnight in an Omnibus—An Omniscient Headmaster.

I HAVE taken no little trouble to discover the exact meaning of a humourist. I think, perhaps, from a professional point of view—if I may be permitted to describe literary pursuits as a profession—I think I may advance some claim to the title. During a career now extending to close upon half-a-century I have been intimately associated with comic papers, or perhaps I should say, would-be comic papers. I have been editor of three or four, and on one paper of great celebrity I was assistant editor for more than twenty years. But my desire in these pages is rather to extend the range of the humourist than to diminish it.

According to some of the dictionaries "humour" is not invariably professedly comic. It may be that the humourist is rather a sad dog. I have no desire to be a sad dog, or a dull dog, but I do not wish to be continually imitating the bucolic sense of humour by grinning through a horse collar. I wish to reserve to myself the right to be grave or

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

gay as the humour seizes me. I am the more anxious to protect myself in this fashion because there are so many opinions about the comic vein. To one man what may be vastly amusing, to another may be just the reverse. Most people know the story of the gentleman who was found in fits of laughter, and who gave as the reason for his hilarity that he was roaring because his sister had fallen downstairs and killed herself. "I have never laughed so much," explained this easily tickled humourist, "since father cut his throat when suffering from delirium tremens."

In my own recollections I have in mind a visit paid to the old Polytechnic Institution, when that once popular society encouraged "instruction combined with amusement." My companion was my old friend and editor, Sir Francis Burnand—then the leading contributor to *Punch*—and we were seated in the theatre of the establishment listening to a company of glee singers. For some reason or other the programme dragged a little. Those popular part songs, "The Chough and Crow," and "The Hardy Norseman," had not created enthusiasm, and even an invitation "to come and kiss me sweet and twenty," extended to the audience by a large body of middle-aged choristers had fallen flat. Then there was a short consultation and the leader of the band stood up and addressed those who sat in front of the footlights. "Ladies and gentlemen,—To enliven these proceedings, Mr. So-and-so will now sing a rather

FRIENDS OR FOES ?

humorous song," and later on Mr. So-and-so obliged the company. So I am anxious to disarm criticism by confessing that it may be considered that I am only a "rather humorous" writer. In the honour of English comic journalism I do not wish to give myself entirely away. I have been in the past so long connected with humorous literature that my patriotism prompts me to claim some title to the reputation of "an amusing rattle." But whatever sort of humourist these pages may prove me to be—and I assume as we are a commercial nation that anyone who purchases the book will not throw away his money by neglecting to read it—I trust I shall be able to retain the title from start to finish of being a good humourist.

It has been my excellent fortune to make scores and scores of friends during my sojourn on this wicked world, and I cannot call to mind the name of a single enemy. Possibly I have a bad memory for such matters. Certainly this bad memory has caused me at times a little embarrassment when I have seized by the palm the hand of a man whose face has been familiar to me. It was only after the greeting that I have recollected that we were "not on speaking terms." But it is only right to add, in the interests of human nature, that these incidents have never led to unpleasant results. On the contrary my forgetfulness has, I think I may say, invariably produced a reconciliation. Taking them all round, a man's

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

neighbours in the struggle for life are at heart thoroughly good fellows. At least, such is my experience; and I have had to do, from my youth up to what I may term my middle age, with all sorts and conditions of men.

In these recollections I shall not confine myself to the dim and distant past. We have ceased with the end of 1900 to be *fin de siècle*, but we still are anxious to be "up-to-date." Events, thanks to the Press and the telegraph, pass so rapidly nowadays that what was "news" yesterday becomes "ancient history" to-morrow. I shall deal with that recent "ancient history" together with the stories of (not so) long ago.

I am proud to claim to be the son of an eminent man, and in consequence of my parentage I came across as a boy a number of celebrities whose names will live in history. My father, the late Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, Metropolitan police magistrate and man of letters, was an intimate friend of the earliest guests at the historical "*Punch* Table" from Thackeray to Douglas Jerrold, and naturally I had also the honour of their acquaintance. I am afraid at the time I did not sufficiently appreciate the advantage of their companionship. The tie that bound me most pleasantly to "Titmarsh," "Boz," John Leech and the other members of the brilliant society was, I fear, the receipt of shillings presented to me when I was permitted to appear as a supplement to the dessert. Still, I lived long enough before my father's death to hear a

SCHOOL AND MISERY

great deal about the kind faces that beamed at me when I stood beside my mother's chair before the signal was given for the better sex to withdraw. And I remember too that I was often allowed to remain in the dining-room because there was nothing in the conversation of the gentlemen that could shock a child before the company joined the ladies. Many of those who were my father's guests were members of the *Punch* staff, and I can say that the tradition governing "Dr. Mark's Merry Men" in 1855 continued to the day when in 1874 I joined the hospitable board of Bouverie Street. During my long connection with *Punch* I never heard a tale of any kind that could not have been published in a paper avowedly intended not only for the study of the man of the world, but the boudoir of materfamilias and the schoolrooms of England's daughters.

My friend, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, has popularised in one of the excellent papers under his able control "Stories of One's Youth." I have a recollection that two or three years ago he did me the honour to ask me to contribute to the series, and when I had complied with the request, was kind enough to describe the screed as "very interesting." Encouraged by this approbation from one of our greatest critics, I venture to deal with some of the incidents of the days of my youth. I am not quite sure that they were humorous. My recollection of going to school is one of misery. It is strange in after years how fond one is of the seat of learning

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

which was one's Alma Mater. I have had on more than one occasion the honour of taking the chair at an assembly of "old boys," and I have always been surprised to notice how delighted everyone concerned in these festivals is with the recollections of the past. Apparently canes and "straps" are forgotten and only "breaking-ups" are borne in mind. Perhaps it is the "social side" that comes to the surface. At a recent gathering an old clergyman who had been considerably my senior gave me the roll-call of his time in "nick-names." He had forgotten Brown and Jones, but perfectly well remembered "Tiger" (contracted into "Tig") Major, and a now very celebrated general who used to be called "Gazy."

About my earliest recollection dates from the time when I was three years old, when I was brought down with my younger brother, a baby in arms, to be shown to a gentleman I subsequently learned to know as Charles Dickens. It was at Portland House, North End, Fulham, where I had the honour to take my first breath of life. Nowadays the place is known as West Kensington. In the days of my youth there was but one real Kensington, the Royal suburb, bounded on the north by Campden Hill, on the east by Kensington Gore, on the south by Kensington New Town, and on the west by Holland Park. Portland House was about half-a-mile further west and some little further in the same direction Albert Smith, the King of Mont Blanc, had his villa. In

THE FIRST EDITORS OF *PUNCH*

those days the cabmen were at loggerheads with the public, and many were the disputes about distances. Albert Smith—who had belonged to and seceded from *Punch*—was never on good terms with the extortionate Jehus of the “hackneys,” so he had the exact distance from his house at Hammersmith to the Egyptian Hall (his place of entertainment) measured, and the result engraved on a stone supporting the railings. I am not sure whether the stone still exists with its inscription, but if it does, it will be found nearly opposite the modern site of St. Paul’s School. Albert Smith was the godfather of my elder brother, the late Sir Albert à Beckett, the last Assistant Accountant General of the Army, who died two years ago.

“Pony” Mayhew, brother of Henry Mayhew, the first joint-editor with Mark Lemon and my father of *Punch*, stood in the same relationship to my younger brother, Walter Horace Callender à Beckett, the baby boy who, with myself, was introduced to Charles Dickens in Portland House. Henry Mayhew had been at Westminster School with my father, and at a very early age both of them had engaged in comic journalism. Mr. Spielmann, the Historian of *Punch*, has had much to say about the early fortunes of the *London Charivari*, and in a book I published some few years since with the modest, yet not altogether inappropriate title of “The à Becketts of *Punch*,” I went over the same ground dotting the “i’s” and crossing the “t’s” of my friend’s earlier volume

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

of comic reminiscences. Probably a strong bond of union between Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray and my father was a common friendship with that most amiable of men, John Leech, who lived in Kensington, just opposite Phillimore Place. The house and garden has disappeared, but for many years it was occupied by another *Punch* man, Mr. Silver, who, I believe, is, with Sir John Tenniel, Sir Francis Burnand, Mr. Linley Sambourne, and myself, one of the quintette of survivors of the old guard who protected "Mr. Punch" from the attacks of all comers.

Another friend of "Titmarsh" and "à Beckett the Beak" (the subject of one of the poems of "Policeman X") was Richard, otherwise "Dicky" Doyle. When "Dicky" Doyle seceded from *Punch* in the days of the so-called "Papal Aggression," he never lost touch with his old associates at the Table and remained to the end an intimate friend of Thackeray and my father. What Leech was to my father in the Comic Histories of England and Rome was Doyle to Thackeray in the Comic Histories of Miss Tickletoby and the real French Revolution in *Punch*. When Thackeray accepted the Editorship of the *Cornhill Magazine*, one of the earliest contributors was "Dicky" Doyle. The son of "H. B." had made a great success in conjunction with "Professor" Percival Leigh in his illustrations to "The Manners and Customs of the English in 1849." The letterpress was a parody

A CHAT WITH "DICKY" DOYLE

of Pepys' Diary—the "Diary of Mr. Pipp's"—and Thackeray invited his old friend to repeat the experiment by giving double-page drawings of life in the "sixties." But I am afraid the second edition of the idea was not very popular. They were a *succès d'estime*. They attracted attention on account of the signature of the artist.

Many years later, when I had in contemplation the establishment of a comic paper something on the lines of *Punch*, I called upon "Dicky" Doyle and asked him if he would join me in the venture. I met him at the Stafford in Savile Row, which was then the club of the Catholics, and no one could have been kinder. He was not particularly enthusiastic, but said he would do his best to help me for the sake of my father. He approved of my list of proposed contributors, for some of the finest wits of the age in those days—as even in these—were not on the staff of *Punch*, but he told me he was not anxious to rush into the miscellaneous work which comic journalism entailed upon its votaries. He had returned to his first love of fairy-land. He infinitely preferred to draw Queen Mab and her court to depicting the statesmen and others of the reign of Victoria of good and glorious memory. Besides the friend of my father had reached an age when he preferred the leisured ease of cultured society to the bustle of Fleet Street journalism. Years later I met his nephew, my friend, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, when Sir Francis Burnand, with the approval of the present

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proprietors of *Punch*, placed in my hands the arrangement of "the Extra Pages" which enriched the *London Charivari* with so much admirable matter. In the "forties" Douglas Jerrold had published "The Story of a Feather," and "other eminent hands" (as Thackeray called them) had continued the movement. The notion was that history should repeat itself, and *Punch* should once again have a series of comic stories.

I appealed as the first on my list to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and I shall never forget the long two hours in the Hotel in Charing Cross which I occupied in persuading one of our most brilliant authors to undertake the task. My friend, inheriting the respect for *Punch* that had descended from an earlier generation, was really nervous as to his ability to write up to the standard required by Bouverie Street. As I had been on the staff for a quarter-of-a-century, although I had the profoundest respect for the paper, I did not regard the work of my colleagues—or my own work—in awe of a paralysing character. After much consideration, Conan Doyle very kindly furnished a sketch, but only on the distinct understanding that it should not be accepted by the Editor if he believed it to be under the value of the *Punch* standard. I need scarcely say that it more than realised expectation, and was one of the best articles ever published in the periodical that contained the finest work of Thackeray, Jerrold, à Beckett, Du Maurier, Shirley Brooks and Burnand.

“ ADAPTING FROM THE FRENCH ”

When I saw Charles Dickens in Portland House he had come to discuss the advisability of dramatising one of his Christmas stories to prevent the pirates from mutilating his handiwork. At that time the great novelist, who was also a born dramatist, had lost his taste for the work of the playwright. I fancy he must have had rough usage at the hands of Braham, the Lessee of the St. James'. "The Village Coquettes" was a playlet produced at the house in King Street, and I believe "Boz" owed his introduction to my father, who was "the hack author" to the management in those days. There are those who trace in "Nicholas Nickleby" some points of resemblance in his story to the early career of Gilbert Abbott à Beckett. My father was a most prolific writer, and on one occasion wrote, rehearsed and produced a play within six days. The pay of the theatre was wretched when compared with the profits of the novelist. One hundred pounds an act was the highest remuneration receivable. This was not so very bad when it is remembered that in the days before the Berne Convention adaptations from the French meant literal translations with names of persons and places nationalised, or rather denationalised. The English author had only to change the Bois de Boulogne to Hyde Park and Mons. Prudhomme to Mr. John Jones to perform his task to admiration. It was only within a short distance from his death that Charles Dickens returned to his first love, the work of a playwright.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

He wrote "No Thoroughfare" in collaboration with Wilkie Collins as a Christmas story and consented to share its dramatisation with his collaborator. I believe to the last he was a little reluctant to undertake the task, and only at the urgent solicitation of Charles Fether consented to the proposition. All the world knows that Charles Dickens was an admirable actor. His friends had an opportunity of seeing him in the famous amateur theatricals at Tavistock House, while the general public had to rest satisfied with his "readings."

One of my most vivid recollections of tragedy at its greatest was the reading of Charles Dickens from the pages of "Oliver Twist." Nothing could have been more terrible than the death of Nancy, and Fagin in the condemned cell. So it came to pass that Charles Dickens, disgusted no doubt with the poor pay and the general atmosphere of the play-house, appealed to his old friend Gilbert Abbott à Beckett to protect "The Chimes" from the desecrating pen of the unscrupulous adapter. My father, as was his custom, called to his aid Mark Lemon to collaborate. Like other collaborators one of the pair wrote while the other "produced." My father who, as a young man, was a most prolific contributor to the repertoire of the so-called "Minor Theatres," took in middle life a strong distaste to "behind the scenes." He was extremely shy and could never be enticed to act in amateur theatricals. Charles Dickens

PAST GLORIES OF KENSINGTON SCHOOL

persuaded him to allow his name to be put in the play-bill of one of the Tavistock House performances, but at the last moment my father cried off, and the rôle allotted to him had to be undertaken by a substitute. So, when "The Chimes" was given to him to dramatise, Mark Lemon was called in to rehearse the version prepared by Gilbert Abbott à Beckett.

Until the death of my father in 1856, when I was within a couple of months of twelve years of age, Kensington was my dwelling-place. I was sent to the Kensington Grammar School, then a highly prosperous seat of learning in federation with King's College. There were between three hundred and four hundred boys. Dr. Payne Smith, subsequently Dean of Canterbury, was the headmaster, and Mr. Frost, who later on became a famous army "coach," was second in command, and had a house in Kensington Square. Our cricket field and playground was on the site now occupied by the station of the underground railway, and three laps of its circumference measured a mile. One of my contemporaries, R. A. Bayford, K.C., subsequently allowed me to study law in his chambers in King's Bench Walk, when I was called to the Bar, and tradition declares that Earl Roberts was at the school in the days of the Rev. Dr. Hessey. We had a first-rate eleven, and my old friend Bayford subsequently played and rowed for his University when he went up to Cambridge.

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While I was at Kensington School I received a number of prizes. I have no doubt they were thoroughly well deserved, but I have an uneasy feeling in my now maturer years that some of my class-fellows were at a disadvantage because they had not—like myself—the privilege of possessing a parent on the staff of *Punch*. The writing master was a wag, and, naturally, we all thoroughly appreciated his witticisms in school hours. When he had perpetrated a more than usually good joke he used to call me up after the class had been dismissed and ask me if I really and truly thought his jest was “good enough for *Punch*.” I invariably replied in the affirmative. Then he would give me a neatly written paragraph and say I might keep it. Then I would choose a propitious moment, hand it to my father and ask his opinion on its merits. As a rule, my father would reply, “As old as the hills.” But on one memorable occasion my parent smiled and said that the jest was “not half bad,” and later on the writing master’s witticism, slightly “dressed up,” appeared in *Punch*. The pedagogue was delighted, and, at the end of the term, somewhat to my surprise—as my caligraphy has never been my strongest point—I got a prize for writing!

Dr. Payne Smith was a most admirable man, but a little hot-tempered. On one breaking-up day, when the late Earl Granville was distributing the prizes, I received the reward of my merits. I heard my headmaster murmur, “He is the son

DR. PAYNE SMITH

of the magistrate," when a well-directed missile from a pea-shooter struck the divine on the nose. Without a moment's hesitation the headmaster rushed up the steps of the arena and seized the culprit. Then he brought him down and turned him out of the room. Having done this, he rearranged his robes, and joined Earl Granville on the daïs and resumed his assistance in the distribution of the prizes.

The next time I met Dr. Payne Smith was some three-and-thirty years later. I had entirely forgotten that he had left Kensington to become a dean. I had gone to Canterbury on rather a sentimental errand. The Cathedral had been invaded by an exploring party, and two working-men with picks and a shovel had turned up some bones which some people assumed to be the relics of Archbishop à Beckett, some time Lord High Chancellor of England. As a member of the Bar, and perhaps for other reasons, I went to Canterbury and found that the bones had been taken from the precincts of the Cathedral. I found them a popular addition to an "At home" held on non-consecrated ground. This was against the Common Law, so I called attention to the fact in the columns of the Press, and the bones of the deceased were re-interred in the spot "from which they were originally taken," as my friend Sir Charles Wyndham used to say in "Brighton," the English version of "Saratoga." While engaged on this little mission I strolled into the Cathedral and heard a familiar voice reading

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

“the first lesson.” When the service was over I walked up to my old headmaster and shook hands with him as I had shaken hands with him as a very small boy thirty-three years earlier. “You don’t know who I am, Mr. Dean,” said I. “Yes, I do,” returned my old headmaster, “you are young à Beckett—and very like your father.”

Dear old Kensington ! I am not surprised that it was loved by Thackeray and his *Punch* contemporaries. On leaving Portland House my father moved to a house in Hyde Park Gate South, next door to one belonging to Thackeray. It was the custom of my parents to spend my father’s holiday from his work as a Metropolitan police magistrate on the Continent, leaving the children at home under the protection of my elder sister (subsequently the wife of the late Sir Henry Leland Harrison) and my eldest brother, then a Queen’s Scholar at Westminster. My brother Gil. used to come home for the Saturday week-end and return to Dean’s Yard on Sunday night. Thackeray had let his house to a most respectable family. The eldest son of this most respectable family was in Holy Orders, and he used to spend the morning of the Sabbath in composing the sermon he proposed delivering at the evening service. Then, I deeply regret to say, was our opportunity. Under the leadership of my brother—sometimes assisted by his “senior,” the late Quintin (Tip) Twiss—we used to organise a plan of campaign. Our

NOISY NEIGHBOURS

object—a most unworthy one—was to disarrange the thoughts of the excellent clergyman composing his nocturnal discourse. We used to fire volleys of missiles through our pea-shooters at him if he sat in the garden, and pour water down the chimneys if he retreated into his house. If we hit upon his study we used to let tongs down with a rope and do our utmost to attract his attention. In fact we behaved shamefully.

At length a letter arrived addressed to my elder sister saying that it would be necessary to complain to Mr. Thackeray, the landlord. The prompt reply was that Mr. Thackeray was a great friend of our father and he would certainly approve of our conduct. At length the time arrived for our parents' return, when my brother (the ringleader of the disturbances) thought it advisable to come to terms. He called upon the family, who were most kind and lenient. He expressed his deep regret that his brothers and sister should have so misbehaved themselves. The good-hearted parson—who subsequently became the "Head" of a college at Oxford,—promised to overlook the matter. For my brother's sake he said he would not refer to the matter either to our parents or Mr. Thackeray. Later on my father and mother fraternised with our neighbours. In the course of conversation one day my mother asked the clergyman's mother how we had behaved during the parental absence abroad. "Very good indeed," replied the kind-hearted lady.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

“ They were never dull, and even on Sundays were always a little merry ! ” A little merry !

À propos of No. 9 Hyde Park Gate South, I have referred in “ The à Becketts of *Punch* ” to the ownership, and my friend Mr. Silver told me that the house belonged to his uncle, the Rev. Mr. Watson, the aforesaid. No doubt our worthy neighbour was a tenant, but Mrs. Richie (the talented authoress and daughter of Thackeray) informs me that the property belonged to her father. No mention is made of the property by the book dealing with the subject which appeared some twenty years ago in America.

One of the pleasantest recollections of my childhood was the memory of the friendship of Michael William Balfe. He had a great appreciation of the talent of my mother, who was one of the very few English ladies who had written an opera for the English stage. My mother was the composer of “ Agnes Sorrel,” produced at the Royal St. James’ Theatre under the management of Braham when my father was “ hack author ” and Charles Dickens was stage-managing “ The Village Coquettes.”

Michael William Balfe was one of our most intimate friends, and no dinner was complete without his presence and that of his talented wife, the late Madame Balfe. Last autumn, when I was in Dublin at the Conference of the Institute of Journalists, I found a bust of the composer, his baton as a conductor, and some of the MS. of his

BALFE'S "SATANELLA"

songs. These had been presented to the Royal Dublin Society by his widow. The late Madame Balfe was most energetic in obtaining recognition of her husband's talents after his death. She secured the admission of a monument to him in Westminster Abbey and kept his memory green in the land of his birth. My recollection of him was as one of the kindest and wittiest of men. The ideal of a good-hearted, rollicking Irishman. He would sit down at the piano and play for the hour to his intimates. At the last rehearsal of "Satanella," at Covent Garden, I was present at his invitation. The ladies and gentlemen of the chorus were in their stage dresses, but "the principals" were permitted to appear in "mufti." I never shall forget the arrival of *Arimanes* (the Prince of Darkness) in a high silk hat, an umbrella and a modern frock coat. He was greeted by a chorus of fiends with the most absolute deference. At first I laughed, but later on I felt a little uncomfortable. I experienced the same sort of feeling as that produced on me by the presence of the heroine of "L'Ange du Minuit" in a Paris omnibus. I had seen the spirit of Death in the melodrama at the Ambigu. One of her characteristics was to touch people on the arm and cause their immediate death by the contact. I was quite afraid when I saw this terrible lady in fashionable dress anxious to alight. However, she managed to attract the attention of the conductor without any evil consequences. She

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certainly touched the poor man and did not kill him, at least, he certainly did not die while I was in the prosaic vehicle. Of course I am unable to say what his fate might have been after I had descended. When Mr. Weiss (I fancy that was the name of the representative of *Arimanes*) approached Miss Louisa Pyne, one of the sweetest of singers, I was apprehensive of the most fatal consequences. But no, all went well—Miss Pyne seated on a chair ascended towards the flies—she was wearing a delightful modern costume and showed not the slightest concern as she sang “The Power of Love” to the accompaniment from gesticulating demons of “Oh, rage! she escapes us!”

Another great friend of my father and mother was the late Mr. Charles Kensington Salaman, the composer of “I Arise from Dreams of Thee.” He lived to a ripe old age, and his son, Malcolm, I am happy to say, is my good friend, and a few years since was my theatrical critic when I had the honour of editing the *Sunday Times*. I took a near relative to see Mr. Salaman some little while ago, because my near relative seemed to me to have a decided turn for music. My near relative was then eight years old. Mr. Salaman asked the boy to play something, upon which my near relative gave a not quite accurate version—arranged for one finger—of “I Arise from Dreams of Thee.” “What do you think of his ability?” I asked my old friend. I regret to say that the

“ PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSY ”

opinion of Mr. Salaman was the reverse of satisfactory. On my way home, thinking that my near relative (aged eight) might be disheartened, I explained that Mr. Salaman was one of the greatest composers of the day, and it was consequently a little ridiculous to have attempted to play “ I Arise from Dreams of Thee ” arranged as an exercise for one finger. “ Oh, I didn’t mind,” exclaimed my near relative, aged eight. “ It was only professional jealousy ! ”

Outside the *Punch* staff there were two or three intimate friends of my father who will always be associated with recollections of my childhood. The first was Dr. William Gilbert (the father of the dramatist), who was one of my godfathers. He was the first to come to Boulogne when the news of my parent’s fatal illness reached England, and I hold his memory in the most affectionate respect. He was called “ the modern Defoe,” on account of the realism of his stories. He had the strongest possible opinion about the burdens of the poor, and one of his pet schemes for their relief was an equalisation of the parochial rates. Had he lived to our days he would have seen his dream realised. Another great friend was the late Dr. Forbes Benignus Winslow, who did more for lunacy reform than any of his contemporaries. Dr. Forbes Winslow (whose father was an officer in the Army) was not only a scientist but a brilliant writer and conversationalist. He sat as a journalist in the Gallery of the House of Commons next to

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Charles Dickens, and many of his works are still books of reference. Then I must not omit Charles West Cope, Royal Academician, who lived opposite to us at Hyde Park Gate South. I was at school with his son, and the relations between the two families were of the closest character. Outside the literary circle were Disraeli, Gladstone, Brougham, and, of course, all the celebrities at the Bar.

It may be at some future date I may perhaps be able to write a biography of my father. His was a very interesting career, and with his death was closed an important chapter in my life's history.

After his death I went to Honiton, and later on to Felstead. At both schools my inclination was to write. At the Devonshire seat of learning I had the advantage of the late Dr. Macarness, Bishop of Oxford, for a headmaster, and at Felstead my good old friend, the Rev. W. S. Grignon. I was the Felstead representative of the *Braintree Times*, so I can put in nearly half-a-century as a journalist. During the time that has elapsed since my departure from school I have lost many beliefs. I have seen many illusions dispelled and have found that all that glitters is not gold, and sometimes not even silver. But during my after life there has been one firm belief that has remained with me, and will never leave me. I have to thank my two headmasters for their training, and I am sure of one thing—that they were omniscient. They knew everything. Only the other day—a

AN OMNISCIENT HEADMASTER

few months since—when I had the honour of dining in Hall at Trinity College, Dublin, the excellent provost, after the Latin grace had been said at the end of the repast, whispered to me, “I will tell you a good story about that grace.” It was to the effect that when a provost of Trinity College, Dublin, had been given a piece of Gaelic that no one could decipher, he kept up the prestige of the celebrated seat of learning by repeating the Latin grace as the writing. The explanation was accepted as perfectly satisfactory. Of course the Gaelic inscription was something other than the Latin grace. Now I am convinced that had the piece of Gaelic been presented to my dear old Felstead headmaster he would have given the correct translation without the slightest hesitation.

I am still of opinion that my dear old headmaster knew everything.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF A CIVIL SERVANT OF THE CROWN

In the War Office at Seventeen—Sir John Milton receives his Final Orders before Leaving for the Crimea—"Be Civil to Russell of the *Times*"—Twin Brothers—The Mistake of "Too much Zeal"—The Civil Service and the Press—Stories of the "Occult"—East and West—Sir Hubert Jerningham in the Post Office—The Savings Bank Department—In Touch with Pall Mall—Sir Albert à Beckett—The Staff of the *Owl*—Securing a Salary in Constantinople.

ONE of the jokes half-a-century ago was a riddle about the Civil Service. The question ran, "Why are the Civil Servants of the Crown like the fountains of Trafalgar Square?" The reply was the exquisite witticism, "Because they played from ten to four." I am not sure whether that is the custom of "The Charing Cross spouts" of to-day. But I am quite certain that the fashion has changed in Pall Mall, Whitehall, and Somerset House. On the death of my father, my eldest brother was received into a branch of the Treasury, and my second brother got a nomination for the War Office. The latter passed the necessary competitive examination, and, giving up his commission in the Indian Navy, accepted a chair in Pall Mall. A little later it was necessary that someone should accompany my widowed mother to India, and the authorities kindly arranged that my brother Albert should be allowed to give up his place to me while he went to the East Indies to see how he liked them. Thus it came to pass that at the age of seventeen I found myself on the strength of the War Office.

ADVICE FROM SIR JOHN MILTON

I shall never forget my first day in Pall Mall. It was not very long after the termination of the American Civil War, and the scare caused by the seizure of the Confederate Commissioners (Messrs. Mason and Slidell) by the Federals during the contest. As usual, the British Government had increased the size of the War Department on panic principles. There were too many clerks and too little work. I came as my brother's *locum tenens* at a time when his place could easily have been allowed to remain unoccupied. But, of course, that was not my affair. I was fresh from Felstead and eager for the fray. I was introduced to my official chief, the late Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Milton, then Assistant Accountant-General of the Army, a post gained only three years ago by my brother, the late Sir Albert à Beckett. He was exceedingly kind and counselled me to be up to time in my attendance at the office, and not to do more than was required of me. "Your brother," said he, "is an excellent official, and if you follow in his footsteps you will be a good official too. The Service is our first consideration, but don't do too much. You are not expected to injure your health by over-exertion." There was a twinkle in the eye of John Milton as he gave me this advice. He was a man of great humour and of literary tastes. He acted for some years as "reader" to the Mr. John Murray of his period.

When I joined in Pall Mall, a story was going the rounds of the Office which has its point to-day

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when there is a talk of putting war correspondents under the control of an Act of Parliament. It cropped up at the conference of the Institute of Journalists in Ireland when I spoke on the subject in the Examination Hall of Trinity College, Dublin. The story ran as follows :—There had been a terrible to-do about the condition of affairs at Balaclava. The papers had been ringing with the mismanagement of everything that could be mismanaged in the Crimea. It was decided to send John Milton, one of the brightest of the War Office men, to the seat of war, to act to the best of his ability, and then to report how matters really stood on his return home. Milton was ready to start and paid his last visit to Pall Mall to receive his last orders. He entered the palatial apartments of the Secretary of State—all the chief rooms in the old War Office burrow in Pall Mall were palatial—and listened to his final instructions. Lord Panmure, who was seated with a copy of *Punch* open before him with a cartoon of “The General Fast Asleep” or some such kindly witticism, looked up at his visitor with an enquiring smile.

“I am Mr. Milton,” explained the future Accountant-General of the Army.

“Ah, to be sure,” returned the Secretary of State for War, referring to a paper, one of many which had been tied together by red tape. “Yes, Mr. Milton. You are going to the Crimea to see how things are progressing. Certainly. Well, I

“DON'T FORGET RUSSELL OF THE *TIMES*”

hope you will have a pleasant journey.” Milton bowed and said he believed that the Secretary of State had asked to see him.

“Why, of course. To be sure. Well—hum—Mr. Milton, yes, Mr. Milton, you will see how things are progressing. Of course you will be careful not to do anything to compromise the Department. Mind and be courteous to everyone. Remember you are a civilian and that civilians must not ruffle the military. Peppery people, the military ; mind you are civil and conciliatory to everyone. Yes, everyone.”

Milton promised that he would be “conciliatory and courteous to everyone, yes, everyone.”

“Quite right, Mr. Milton ; I see that the Department has made a wise selection. Yes, a wise selection. But I particularly wanted—I particularly wanted—to call your attention to one person of importance you will meet in the Crimea very probably. And that in fact was the reason I begged you to favour me with this interview. Yes, I begged you to favour me with this interview.”

Milton bowed again and waited for his final instructions.

“You will be courteous and conciliatory and everything that is pleasant to that rather severe critic of our methods—Mr. Russell of the *Times*. Good day, Mr. Milton, I hope you will have a pleasant journey. Don't forget. Be civil to Russell of the *Times*.”

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And these were the final instructions of Panmure to Milton on the eve of the latter's departure for the Crimea. When I heard the discussion on the proposed Press Muzzling Bill at the Conference of the Institute of Journalists at Dublin, I could not help remembering this little anecdote anent my honoured friend, Sir William Howard Russell, otherwise "Billy of the *Times*."

John Milton had a twin brother who was his exact double. The only difference between them was their costume. Milton's brother was a clergyman, and used to visit his near relative in clerical attire. He was seated at his brother's desk in his brother's absence one day when an official rushed in and began telling a rather important office secret.

"Stop, stop, sir!" cried Milton's clerical relative. "You are making a mistake. I am not my brother!"

To return to my first day at the War Office. I reported myself to my chief, a most delightful gentleman some twenty or thirty years my senior. He introduced me to all his colleagues as "Coco's brother." "Coco" was my brother's nickname. Everyone was as kind and as civil as could be. There were five desks, and one was allotted to me. Any amount of stationery and all sorts of official books of reference, a most cheerful apartment, with a number of specimen-glasses, which later on contained flower button-holes to be worn in the hour allowed for lunch, say 12 noon, in

FIRST DAY IN THE WAR OFFICE

Piccadilly or Rotten Row. I was most courteously invited to read the *Times*. I got through the *Times* fairly rapidly while my colleagues had a friendly chat about the doings of the day, or, rather, night. Someone had gone to such a ball where the supper was only "tol lol," and the play of yesterday evening was, in spite of what the papers said of it, awfully dull. My colleagues were the most charming of companions, but I must confess that Dickens' sketch of the Circumlocution Office was scarcely a caricature.

After reading the *Times* through and finding the conversation of my courteous colleagues a little above me, as at the age of seventeen I had scarcely plunged into the vortex of polite London society—the word "smart" in its modern sense had not been invented—I ventured to address my chief.

"Can I do anything?" I asked, as I stood beside him at his desk. "Is there anything for me to do?"

He seemed a little perplexed. The other denizens of the room paused for a moment in their conversation to hear his reply. It seemed to me that they appeared to be amused. My chief looked at me and then at the papers in front of him.

"Ah!" said he at last, with a sigh of relief, "are you fond of indexing?" I replied I was fond of anything and everything that could be of the slightest service to my country. If those were not the exact words I used, that was the spirit of my answer.

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“ I see a glutton for work,” observed my chief, with a smile that found reflection on the faces of my other colleagues. “ Well, à Beckett, just index this pile of circulars.”

I seized upon the bundle and returned to my desk. Oh, how I worked at those circulars. There were hundreds of them, and I docketed them with the greatest care and entered their purport into a book. From time to time my official chief, so to speak, looked in upon me to see how I was getting on.

“ I say,” said he, “ there is no need to be in such a desperate hurry. I am not in immediate need of the index. You can take your time, you know. Wouldn't you like a stroll in the Park ? Most of us have a little walk during the day. We none of us stand upon ceremony, and are quite a happy family.” But no, I stuck to my indexing, and, after some three days of fairly hard work, found my labours done. I took up the bundle of circulars, now in apple-pie order, and laid them on my chief's desk.

“ I say, à Beckett,” said he, “ this won't do. You are too good a fellow to be allowed to cut your own throat, and for your brother's sake I will give you a tip. Don't do more than you are asked to do. Now I gave you those circulars to index because you would bother me for work. I didn't want the index. Now it's done it's not the least bit of use to me. Of course it may come in useful some day, but I scarcely see how it

TOO MUCH ZEAL A MISTAKE

can, as the lot are out-of-date, but of course it may."

He paused, and evidently the suggestion of the index's utility was thrown in to save a wound to my feelings.

"So take my advice, my dear fellow, as a man double your age, and with six times your experience. Don't you do a scrap more than you are asked to do. If you will hunt up work which is unnecessary, why, you will grow disgusted when you find that it is unnecessary. Then you will lose heart and fall off in your work when we really have something to do—we do have work really sometimes when we stick to it like niggers—and then you will get a reputation for being a failure."

I took my friend's advice, and from that time forth, so far as the Civil Service was concerned, never sought the reputation of being a glutton for work.

Far be it from me to suggest that every office in the Civil Service was overcrowded as we were in Pall Mall in the "sixties." The War Department stood alone in the sense that it was most easily affected by a panic. In the times of peace, when the establishment was reduced to the lowest limit, there was no doubt plenty of work to do, but on the outbreak of hostilities there came a rush of work which demanded an immediate increase of clerical assistance. The result was that when peace returned the War Office was found overmanned to an enormous extent. I was in Pall

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Mall at such a time as I have described, and although in due course I did find something useful to do, yet I cannot honestly say that my energies from an official point of view were taxed to the utmost. In the days of which I speak competition was limited. Before one could compete for an appointment one had to obtain a nomination for a particular office. Since then I believe that the whole of the Civil Service, without reference to branches, is open to the public.

It seems to me that the best plan would be to treat the Civil Service as a whole, and make it possible to transfer Government clerks from one office to another to meet the needs of the situation. Of course this could be done, and, occasionally, was done in individual instances. For instance, such an occurrence did come off when I was at Pall Mall. It happened that I was there when we had one of our periodical scares about our relations with Russia. We came to the conclusion—with the kind assistance of the Press—that Russia had sinister views relating to India. It was considered important that some Civil Servant with a knowledge of the Russian language should be at the India Office to translate Muscovite papers from the vulgate into English. It was discovered that the India Office had no one amongst its numerous employes capable of the task. Then to our pride the War Office came to the rescue. Amongst my friends in Pall Mall I numbered a most accomplished gentleman who had a brother holding a

THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE PRESS

high official position in Petersburg. My War Office friend was in the habit of spending his leave in Russia with his relative. While in the City of the Czars he picked up the tongue of the country and came back to England speaking and reading Russian with fluency. To make a long story a short one, my friend was lent from Pall Mall to Whitehall because he was believed to be the only Civil Servant in England capable of speaking Russian.

But be this as it may, about the time of which I speak a very large number of Civil Servants were connected with literature and the Press. In the War Office were Clement Scott, Tom Hood, Norman Lockyer, and many others, some of whom are still connected officially with Pall Mall and Fleet Street. Sir John Milton, to whom I have referred, was a reader for John Murray, the celebrated publisher of Albemarle Street. My first editor on *Punch*, Tom Taylor, was at Somerset House and one of the earliest captains of the Civil Service Volunteers. Then that most excellent statesman, Mr. Thomas Gibson Bowles, who for so many years represented King's Lynn in the House of Commons, was a clerk in the Legacy Duty Office in Somerset House. Consequently those "in the know" were not greatly surprised when Captain Cuttle—as *Punch* called him for no apparently appropriate reason—suddenly appeared as an expert of the first importance in a discussion on the death duties. Mr. W. S. Gilbert

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was also at one time a clerk in Somerset House, and his brother dramatist, the late Mr. W. S. Godfrey, was at the Admiralty. Edmund Yates was at the Post Office, so was Anthony Trollope. I fancy that there was a little brochure published in the late "sixties" or early "seventies" proving that nearly all the prominent writers of the day were either members of the Bar or the Civil Service. In both professions in the days of one's youth there used to be plenty of leisure.

It was while I was in Pall Mall that I first made my serious dash into comic literature. My brother Albert was in India and our eldest, Gilbert, was in the Treasury. My brother Gilbert and I occupied rooms in Hanover Square, over apartments tenanted by Hume, the earliest exponent of spiritualism. Hume was not half a bad fellow as I knew him. I am afraid that later on a trial proved him to be rather wrong about the occult. I forget the details, but I remember it caused a sensation in the papers. The house of which my brother and myself and Mr. Hume occupied flats was at the corner of Hanover Square, immediately opposite the Oriental. Later on the house was converted into the Arts Club, which has now found other quarters in Dover Street. Hume was fond of Shakespeare and organised a Shakespeare Reading Guild, which used to hold its meetings in his rooms in Hanover Square. It was the days of spirit-rapping and table-turning, and it was said that Hume's furniture was always running about

STORIES OF THE "OCCULT"

the staircase during the early hours of the morning with its proprietor after it in hot pursuit. I never believed the story. Of course it is not an easy matter to prove a negative, but I must declare that I never saw an armchair, much less a sofa, perambulating the hall or indeed outside the precincts of its owner's premises.

As I have referred to Hume and spiritualism, I may here, perhaps, mention some strange facts connected with the occult. As I have not bound myself to any particular rule about my recollections, I follow my bent as the humour seizes me. I have been writing about my tenancy of a flat in Hanover Square in the early "sixties" and with a stroke of my pen I skip the larger part of half a century. Hey, presto! it is done. I have been editing the *Sunday Times* for some years, and it has been sold over my head. The real purchasers have been kept hidden from me, and I have been led to believe, by an intermediary, that the new owners are a syndicate consisting of the late Lord Randolph Churchill and other statesmen of the same political opinions. One who has the power of automatic writing scribbled that the real proprietor was "Beer," called "Observer." I had not the slightest idea to whom this message referred, and was surprised to find some weeks later that the lady who had purchased the *Sunday Times* was Mrs. Beer, the wife of the proprietor of the *Observer*. Again only a short while ago the same hand scribbled that a well-known gentleman was about

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to revive a paper of which I had purchased the copyright. It was the same hand that wrote what purported to be a message from my brother Gilbert, to which my friend Mr. Spielmann refers in his colossal volume giving "The History of *Punch*."

Shortly, I was to see my friend to assist him in some matter connected with my father's contributions to the *London Charivari*. The hand scribbled a message to Mr. Spielmann, asking him to revise his proof and pointing out where he was in the wrong. Mr. Spielmann took the message as it was written and corrected the proof as directed. Very strange.

To return to my first effort in literature outside my boy reportership of Felstead news on the staff of the *Braintree Times*. Ruskin had had something to say about Art at the Royal Academy, and my brother Gilbert and I considered that we could not do better than follow his example. So we rushed into print with a "Comic Guide of the Royal Academy." It was not particularly brilliant. We founded our brochure on something of the kind that had appeared in the *Almanack of the Month*, a sixpenny periodical published by Messrs. Bradbury and Evans in 1849. The *Almanack of the Month* had been edited by our father, Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, and illustrated entirely by "Dicky" Doyle. Gil. and I were much amused at the reception our booklet received. The Press were down upon it with scarcely an

THE CIVIL SERVICE EAST AND WEST

exception. Our great fault appeared to be that we neither of us was our father.

It would scarcely be honest, having written so much about the idleness of the Civil Service in the early "sixties," to deny that there were exceptions to the rule. Whatever may have been the custom in the West, in the East hard work was the order of the day. All through my life I have been just the least bit ashamed of having for some three months been on the strength of an office other than the War Department. Having served for a couple of years in Pall Mall, I appeared in St. Paul's Churchyard. My brother Albert had returned to England dissatisfied with India and had resumed his place in the War Office. Although I had acted as his substitute during his absence, my services were retained on my own account. But I felt my position was a precarious one, so, at the suggestion of John Milton, who had a cousin (Sir John Tilley) in the Post Office, I migrated to that branch of the Civil Service. Even now I shudder at the recollection. I had become thoroughly acclimatised to the atmosphere of Pall Mall with its cheery barnacles, its chats about the events of Mayfair, its walks in the Park, its habits of doing nothing in particular, but doing that nothing in particular very well—I never became acclimatised to the air of St. Paul's Churchyard. I passed an examination and found myself an "officer" in the Savings Bank Department of the Post Office.

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There is only one survivor of my colleagues, so far as I know, and he belonged to a far better branch than myself. Sir Hubert Jerningham was in the Secretary's Office of St. Martin's le Grand before exchanging into the Foreign Office and commencing a distinguished diplomatic career. I joined, and found myself in a long room, with scores and perhaps hundreds of clerks hard at work from ten until any hour, scribbling at express train speed, as if their very lives depended upon their industry. I did my best, but I was particularly annoyed by being overseered by an official of some sort who frequently singled me out for admonition. I was always perfectly civil. I ascertained that his official title was Assistant-Inspector, or some such thing. His name may have been—it was not—Smith or Brown. The room was placarded with notices giving instructions to "the officers." I was one of "the officers."

"Mr. à Beckett," said the Assistant-Inspector one day, "it seems to me that you must be ill. You do not seem to be making those entries with the average activity. Are you ill, sir?"

"Never in better health, thank you, Assistant-Inspector. Never in better health, sir."

"Mr. à Beckett, may I ask you why you are good enough to always address me as Assistant-Inspector?"

"Because, sir," I replied, smiling genially, "I was under the impression that that was your official title."

A FINAL APPEARANCE

"It is my official title, sir, but other officers are accustomed to call me by my surname, sir."

"Oh, certainly," I said calmly, taking out my note-book, "will you kindly tell me your surname, sir?"

"My name is Brown, sir—Brown," thundered the Assistant-Inspector.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Brown. Pardon me, but do you spell your name with a final 'e'?"

There was a titter, and the Assistant-Inspector, or whatever the gentleman's official title happened to be, left me severely alone from that moment until the end of my career in the G.P.O.

The end of my career in the Civil Service was not long deferred. I had been doing a good deal of writing of one sort or another, and outside the scanty pay earned in St. Paul's Churchyard was securing a living wage. So I determined to resign. I had a friend who possessed a waggonette drawn by a pair of good-looking horses. He was kind enough to give me the reins so that I might drive up to the Savings Bank Department of the Post Office in style. As I got down I noticed that my pet aversion was peering at me over a wire blind on the first floor. With a buttonhole in my coat and wearing lavender kid gloves I entered the official apartment and greeted my chief with much cordiality.

"I suppose, Mr. à Beckett, you wish to express your regret at being ten minutes late, sir, ten minutes late."

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“Indeed I do, Mr. Browne. I am extremely sorry, but the traffic was congested.”

“This is most unsatisfactory, Mr. à Beckett, most unsatisfactory. It appears to me, sir, that you have a distaste for the Civil Service. It is very much to be regretted when an officer has a distaste for the Civil Service.”

“Most regrettable, Mr. Browne. But I cannot say I have a distaste altogether for the Civil Service. I found congenial work in the War Office.”

“I did not know there was any work in the War Office, Mr. à Beckett.”

“Well, to a large extent you are right, Mr. Browne,” I replied, smiling affably. “There was not much work in Pall Mall—I mean the sort of work to which you refer—but what work there was we divided equally amongst us, and so, you see, kept things going.”

Mr. Browne looked at me and I at him.

“The fact is, Mr. Browne,” I continued, “I have come on a very painful errand. I have come to tender my resignation. Pray do not think for a moment that I have anything to complain of. I am very fond of my colleagues—I beg your pardon, my brother officers—and I have every possible respect for you. Really and truly—chaff apart—I can’t afford the expense. Coming here day after day costs me a small fortune in cab fares!”

Mr. Browne seemed to be astounded. Then I

THE SAVINGS BANK DEPARTMENT

explained the exact position and my official chief relaxed. He agreed with me that if I could conveniently do without the Savings Bank Department of the Post Office I was to be congratulated. He admitted that it was not exactly paradise, and ultimately we parted on excellent terms. But I confess the iron had entered into my soul, and from that time to this I have never forgotten the wretched hours I spent in St. Paul's Churchyard. When I had a comic paper, a few years later, I gave a sketch of Hades, after the fashion of the classical burlesques of Disraeli. All the inhabitants of the dismal country of tortures were miserable save one who was delighted. The pleased sojourner in the Infernal Regions was so thankful for his improved condition. While on earth he had been a clerk in the Savings Bank Department of the Post Office! In my first story, "A Novel of Interest," I introduced a sketch of the Pauper's Property Office, which was recognised by those who did me the honour of reading my book as uncommonly like the Savings Bank Department of the Post Office. No doubt everything is changed since then. I have every belief that the Department nowadays is perfection. I would not for a moment suggest the reverse. But I must confess that the bad condition of affairs lasted for some little time after I had quitted the establishment. I happened to run across a brother novelist, and comparing notes, found that he also had been a clerk in the Savings

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Bank Department of the Post Office. He had heard of my chaff of the place and shared in a hearty laugh. "Well," said I, "and how are things now?"

"Worse!" was the reply.

But that conversation—if my memory does not play me false—took place many, many, many years ago. Nowadays, of course, the Savings Bank Department of the Post Office is a model to the British Civil Service. May it live long and prosper!

Before I quit the subject of the Civil Service I would like to offer a few suggestions. When I became a Government clerk the admission to the office was a matter of some little difficulty. A man—or rather a boy—had to be of a fairly good social position. He had to obtain a nomination from a member of the Government, and although there were rumours of occasional exceptions to the rule, nominations were only given to children of people of a certain standing, as the old idea used to be that the voter should have a stake in the country, so the Civil Servant was expected to have a status worth preserving. When I was in the War Office there was an effort to establish a Civil Service Club. The effort was successful—for the moment. A Civil Service Club was opened in St. James' Street and still survives under the title of the Thatched House. The first committee decided that it must be absolutely first-class, equal to the *cercles* of the United Services and the

“ONE MAN AS GOOD AS ANOTHER”

Universities, as Civil Servants were the peers of officers of the Army and Navy, clergymen, barristers, and in fact that large body of Englishmen who by law hold the title of “Esquire.” Now an esquire has something to lose, and putting it on the lowest grounds it is too expensive to cease to be a man of honour. I have smiled at the suggestion thrown out by the Post Office people that Government employés were “officers,” but it was the spirit of the “officer and gentleman” of the King’s Regulations that governed the Civil Service when I was in it, from the junior clerk to the Secretary of State. A man would have as soon thought of betraying an official secret as of betraying himself. Men in the Army and Navy worked for their Sovereign and their country unselfishly, and men in the Civil Service followed that excellent example.

Of late years there has been a wave of democratic exclusiveness. Every post has been thrown open to everybody. One man is as good as another. This we all admitted, although some of us are inclined to add the Irish rider, “not only as good as another, but better.” Since I left the Service I have heard of the betrayal of official secrets; and I know that, at a moment of supreme importance for secrecy in Pall Mall, a circular had to be sent round to the more important officials requesting them to keep confidential papers under lock and key. I was in close touch with the War Office for a long while after I had left it, as there

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was scarcely a day I did not visit my brother Albert in Pall Mall. It is pleasant to me to think of him as one of the best officials the Service ever knew. For some twenty years he was private secretary to the heads of the departments, being handed over as Government succeeded to Government. My friend, the late Sir Wemyss Reid, told me that he met him in this capacity to a Surveyor-General of the Ordnance, who knew far more about commercial matters than heavy gunnery.

"Your brother," said Sir Wemyss, "always kept the Surveyor-General from exposing his ignorance. He came in with a suggestion at the proper moment, which set things to rights and saved the situation."

The occasion was an inspection of the ground opposite Gibraltar, when both the Army and the Navy were represented, and ignorance on the part of the Surveyor-General of the Ordnance would have produced anything rather than bliss. Since the death of my brother I have not been in such close touch with the Civil Service, but I am certain that the safety of the nation demands men in our Government offices of the highest honour. They should have given hostages to fortune by belonging to the best clubs. Levelling down is all very well, but *noblesse oblige* should be the motto of all services of the Crown—military, navy and civil. Perhaps it is. I hope so.

I believe that of late years the merely mechanical work of the Public Office has been given to quite

THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE OWL

a different class of men to those who formerly undertook the duty. No doubt in the interest of economy there is something to be said in favour of this "reform," but I am not at all sure the game is worth the candle. When it is proposed to treat war correspondents as either felons or misdemeanants for divulging inconvenient secrets of a military or naval character, it seems rather absurd to allow impunity to employés of a far lower status.

When I was in the Civil Service the tone of the Government clerk was distinctly literary. The *Owl*, with a frontispiece by "Dicky" Doyle, was edited by the Right Hon. Evelyn Ashley, then Private Secretary to Lord Palmerston. It was said to be the smallest and dearest paper (price 6d.) ever published. Lord Glenesk—who with Mr. Ashley is still with us—was not only a contributor, but the business manager. It appeared only during the season, ceasing to be published when the fashionable world went out of town. Lawrence Oliphant was one of its most prolific writers. Its *specialité* was the earliest official information. Of course, with the editor the private secretary of the Premier, only authorised announcements were made. Mr. Thomas Gibson Bowles was on the outside staff, so were Francis Albert Marshall and other of my friends. I believe too that Scudamore occasionally sent a good story. But of this last report I am uncertain, nor am I quite sure of the truth of the following story. Scudamore had

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been in the Post Office and was lent to the Sultan to organise the telegraphs in Constantinople. He came home on leave and was asked how he liked his new appointment.

“ Oh, very well indeed,” replied Scudamore. “ I had a little difficulty at first in securing regularity in the payment of my salary. However, I soon put that straight.”

“ How did you manage it ? ”

“ Oh, by calling at the Office of the Minister of Finance with a big stick and offering to thrash the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the money was not immediately forthcoming. And I got it.”

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCES OF A SECRETARY

The Importance of a Private Secretary—A Story about Haileybury—The National Chamber of Trade—A Deputation to the Rt. Hon. "Bob" Lowe—No Creed no Breakfast—The Disadvantage of holding Unpopular Opinions—The Private Secretary of a Duke—Catholic Contributors to *Punch*—Bogus Charity—Begging-Letter Impostors—An Appreciation of the Institute of Journalists—A Practical Joke Good Enough for *Punch*—A Memory of Waterloo.

My early training in the War Office prepared me to take the position of a secretary at a moment's notice. I have found through life that there is no more important situation than the *chef du cabinet* of a leading man, be he statesman, soldier or merchant prince. Whenever I have desired to obtain anything from a leading individual I have always in the first instance approached his private secretary. In my own case my first plunge into secretarial duties was as the amanuensis of the son-in-law of a Cabinet Minister. He was one of the most amusing men I have ever met. After a career in the Indian Civil Service in the days of "John Company" he had returned to England to marry a charming lady and to receive a very pleasant appointment in the Government service at home. He was full of projects. Now he was starting a paper, now running a theatre, now establishing a club. He was a great *farceur*, and some of his stories were of the drollest. He had been educated at Haileybury, then the training

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college for candidates for civil appointments under the H.E.I.C. It was the custom at this seat of learning on breaking-up days to have the usual features of a school gathering before the commencement of the vacation. My friend knew that there was a particularly good luncheon for honoured guests. It was at the time of the Napoleonic *entente cordiale* between England and France during the Crimean War. My friend wrote to the head of Haileybury from London informing him that he was a French General who was anxious to see the place, and he would do himself the honour of visiting it on the occasion of the breaking-up. This letter reached the College the day before the festivities, so there was no time to make any inquiries. My friend rushed up to town to a well-known costumier and emerged from the wardrobe keeper's establishment in the uniform of a Marshal of the French Army. Then he went to the late Mr. Clarkson to be made up. With moustache, wig and imperial, a cocked hat, a sword and epaulettes and other martial accessories, he travelled to Haileybury, where he was received with great respect and cordiality by the powers that were. He was shown over the college and asked to return thanks at the luncheon for "the august ally of the Queen, His Majesty Napoleon the Third, Emperor of the French." He complied with the request, and said everything that was right and proper on behalf of his (for the moment) adopted country. The luncheon came

A GAME OF "FLIP A FLOP"

to an end, and then seizing his opportunity he retired to his own study, removed his wig and imperial, and rested.

Unfortunately, one of the staff looked in, and discovery and disaster followed. There was a terrible to-do. However, he who was to become my first official chief was ultimately pardoned, went to India, returned to England, and obtained an important post in the English Civil Service.

The office with which he had to do was a registry. The public wishing to protect their ideas could do so by the payment of a small fee. The pattern of a wall paper, the design of a dinner set, or the rules of a new game were equally applicable for protection. My friend was particularly partial to new amusements, and when the originator of some mysterious pastime remained in attendance, treated him as the umpire of the game. One of my secretarial duties was to take a hand in whatever was under consideration. Say it was "Flip a Flop." The cards were dealt. We looked at the rules, and I knew that by possessing "the Executioner" I marked two.

"But I had the Judge," said my chief.

"Well, rule 15 says that the Baronet takes him. I have the Baronet, I mark 5."

Then followed a row, and the inventor of "Flip a Flop" was sent for. As a rule, the originators of new games were clergymen. They were most anxious to give every information.

"I hope you have noticed, gentlemen," he would

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say, "that 'Flip a Flop,' although having points of resemblance to 'Tiny Twig,' is essentially different. Of course, my title is absolutely original. Then I have introduced the idea of fours by consent, you will find it dealt with in rule 15 B."

We submitted our dispute to the owner, and he adjudicated. In a few minutes the three of us were hard at work at "Flip a Flop."

My first official chief was the life and soul of the *Glow-worm*. We had our little differences of opinion from time to time, but remained good friends to the end of the chapter. I have run across him—like others of my fellow-workers of thirty years ago—from time to time, and always shared pleasant recollections.

My next secretaryship was of an organisation called the National Chamber of Trade. I believe this really useful institution still exists, for I saw a Congress being held somewhere under its auspices not so very long ago. All I can say is, if those now connected with it wish to do me honour by hailing me as the founder and putting up a statue to me, I shall be very pleased to give any sculptor of repute the necessary sittings. One of my journalistic ventures had abruptly terminated. It was, I fancy, *Black and White*, and I was on excellent terms with a number of firms who had done me the honour to advertise in the sister columns to those over which I had editorial control. It is said that advertisements are the last things

THE NATIONAL CHAMBER OF TRADE

to come to a paper and the last to leave it. In the days of my youth I had a following of advertisers of the most respectable kind. They became my personal friends when I started the National Chamber of Trade. I believe that nowadays certain authors of great repute have their advertiser followers. Let Blank appear in such and such a paper, and Chose takes the back page for a series of six insertions. So the story goes. I had met at the Thatched House Club a very pleasant gentleman who belonged to the legal profession and had confided to him my notion for founding a National Chamber of Trade.

"There are already Chambers of Commerce," he suggested.

"But not Chambers of Trade."

"No, but what would they do? The title sounds imposing, but I don't quite see what you are going to do with the organisation."

"Well," said I, "I am not quite sure myself. But I've a hazy notion I might have a shot at the Civil Service Stores."

At the time co-operation was coming into fashion and the West-End tradesmen were furious with the small band of Civil Servants who were the pioneers of the Store system. My learned friend and I put our heads together and decided to call a meeting of the faithful few who were kind enough to advertise in the sister columns to the columns over which I had the honour to exercise editorial control. We held the meeting in my chambers

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in 88 St. James' Street. On the proposal of my learned friend, I took the chair.

"Gentlemen," I began, "I think I may call you—most of you—my personal friends."

I paused for a cheer of acquiescence. As it was rather slow in coming, my learned friend put in a rather indignant "Hear, hear."

"Thank you, then I will call you my personal friends. Well, my personal friends, I need scarcely say, having for a long time been connected with you through the medium of the Press, to which I am proud to belong, that I take the liveliest interest in all that concerns you; it has been particularly painful to me, as one who has been a Civil Servant of the Crown, to notice that some of my colleagues belonging to the same honourable calling have been starting a co-operative society. This should not be."

Then there was a burst of enthusiasm. We were all of opinion that "this should not be." Then and there the National Chamber of Trade was formed, and I was appointed on the spot its secretary.

We had really a very good time of it. My idea was that we should protect the interests of traders—not tradesmen, but traders, mark the distinction—like the sweet little cherub who sits up aloft watching over the life of poor Jack. We formed a strong committee, and our first president was Mr. W. H. Smith. He resigned the position on becoming a member of the Government of the

DEPUTATION TO RT. HON. "BOB" LOWE

day, when his place was taken by Sir Thomas Chambers. We took offices in Duke Street, St. James', to which pleasant street I shifted my quarters from Palace Chambers. Our great idea was to shut up the Stores, but we managed to be useful in other directions. For instance, when we found the series of exhibitions held on the site of the Horticultural Gardens becoming hurtful to our interests, we closed them. I thoroughly enjoyed myself. On one occasion I headed a deputation to interview Mr. "Bob" Lowe, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Right Hon. gentleman received us most courteously. He had come from the *levée* and was wearing the full uniform of a Cabinet Minister. He sat in his chair before his desk playing with a gold pencil case and keeping his gaze fixed on the ground.

"Now, sir," I said, at the end of a very impressive oration, "I must beg you to admit that those I have the honour to represent, the traders of England, have a very solid grievance. I ask you is it fair that they, good citizens as they are, should pay Income Tax when the Stores escape from the impost?"

"But the Stores do pay Income Tax," returned Mr. "Bob" Lowe, suddenly looking up.

"Oh, do they?" I replied rather lamely and collapsed.

We were great hands at petitioning. We called the attention of the members of the House of Commons to our grievances and asked for redress.

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I got rather into trouble by spelling—possibly not unintentionally—the word “pray” as if it were suitable to a vulture. “And your petitioners will ever prey.” We ran a tilt against the inquisitorial manner of collecting the Income Tax. I remember one of our Committee, a most worthy gentleman who advanced money on securities of the most miscellaneous character, telling me that although some of his establishments were being carried on at a loss, he had to submit to being assessed as making a large profit to keep up his credit amongst his neighbours. It was this excellent trader who, on George Augustus Sala being presented to him, observed :

“I think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before, sir.”

To which Sala replied, “Frequently, sir, frequently, but this is the first time I have had the advantage of seeing your legs.”

I had plenty of spare time on my hands and used to act as organising secretary in the provinces. At Windsor I came across the late Mr. Richardson Gardner, M.P., who very kindly took the chair at one of my meetings. I was haranguing my audience about the dignity and purity of commerce, how trade was the backbone of the country ; how, as conducted in England, it was the wonder of the world ; it was honoured and honourable. As I spoke, the chairman passed me a piece of paper upon which he had been writing. “Be careful ; there has been a recent raid and a lot of

THE GOOD WORK OF THE STORES

your audience were found to be keeping false weights and measures."

So I modified my transports.

When there was a contested election anywhere I used to attempt to secure on behalf of the N.C.T. the support of both candidates. I remember at Dover interviewing Jessel (subsequently Master of the Rolls) and his opponent and getting a pledge from each that they would oppose Civil Service trading.

Nowadays the competition of the Stores has been met with the worse competition of the huge private establishments flourishing in Kensington High Street, Westbourne Grove and Tottenham Court Road. But one advantage must be credited to them. The Stores taught the general public to pay their bills. Until the arrival of the co-operative movement, West-End traders used to lose hundreds and thousands a year by defaulters against whom they did not dare to appear. At first the idea of the Stores was to make no profit, but gradually the commercial instinct came to the front, and nowadays the prices at the Stores are not strikingly less than the charges made everywhere. Competition in its acute stage has ceased. Not forty years ago I remember a scare of fire arising round about one of the Stores. The fire engines were called out and their movements impeded by a crowd apparently of tradespeople. But things are different nowadays.

Ultimately I resigned my secretaryship to the

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National Chamber of Trade to become private secretary to the present Duke of Norfolk, who has been a very kind friend to me ever since. It was in the autumn of 1871 that I first met his Grace in St. James's Square, although I had seen him before in the corridors of the Brompton Oratory when I was there to visit Father Faber. The Duke was then wearing an Eton jacket, and I had not long reached the dignity of a cut-away. At the Oratory I had taken a very momentous step at the age of sixteen. Under the headmastership of Dr. Mackarness, subsequently Bishop of Oxford, I had become, like most of his scholars, very High Church, and at Felstead I had "continued the movement" by helping in outlying villages as a Sunday School teacher. But it was when I came across Fathers Faber and John Bowden at the Oratory I crossed the Rubicon and ceased to be a member of the Anglican Church.

Writing these "Recollections of a Humourist," I cannot help smiling at the mode adopted by my family and friends to re-convert me. My brother Gilbert immediately after leaving Christ Church had become a Catholic, and no doubt his influence had weight with me. He was away when I announced my change of views, so I had to meet the storm single-handed. I was a boy of sixteen, but even at that early age was fairly pugnacious. There was a hurried family council, and then it was decided that the best way to bring me to my senses was to turn me adrift. The chief supporter

“NO CREED NO BREAKFAST”

of this plan was my dear brother Albert, by nature the kindest of fellows, and who later on became a Catholic like myself. I shall never forget my visit to the Oratory on that cold autumn morning. I saw Father John Bowden, a cousin of the present Father Sebastian Bowden, once a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Brigade of Guards. Father John was rather surprised. He could not believe that I had any doubts upon any matter of dogma.

“No,” I returned, “that was not the reason of my visit.”

What could he do for me?

I looked at the clock. It was close upon noon. Then I began to laugh as the absurdity of the cause of my visit crossed my mind.

“Well, Father John, the fact is, as I was passing, it struck me that I would call upon you.”

“Quite right, I am always glad to see you.”

“The fact is I am rather hungry, I have had no breakfast.”

“No breakfast!” he exclaimed in a tone of surprise. “Why, whatever made you leave your home fasting?”

“Well, it was suggested to me that I should breakfast elsewhere. And as I have only two-pence-halfpenny in my pocket, I found the task beyond me.”

Of course, in those distant days the A B C shops were not in existence, and although you might obtain a decently good dinner for 6d., it

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was not so easy to break your fast on twopence-halfpenny. Well, I was entertained in the refectory of the Oratory and counselled to go home. I followed the advice of my good friend Father John, and found my family in a kinder temper. I was provided with dinner, and although I had rather a rough time of it for a while, I never had to seek the assistance of the relief sanctioned by the authorities under the Poor Laws. Strange as it may seem, I have never yet been an official guest in a workhouse. However, there was one piece of good luck which followed on my reception by the Church of Rome. Originally, I believe, intended for the Anglican Church, on my father's death an education at the University became to me—a younger son—impossible, so the scheme was abandoned. Then a City friend of my father's took an interest in my future, and promised me a desk, to be followed by a partnership in his firm. The moment I became a Catholic the desk was withdrawn and the promised partnership cancelled, so I thus escaped the chance of becoming a stockbroker, and later on perhaps a millionaire with a bad conscience. But, joking apart, what a cure for a change in religious opinions! I had a difficulty in assenting to all the thirty-nine articles, and was turned out of doors and referred to the workhouse! Rather the Smithfield spirit I am afraid. However, nowadays things are better.

As I am on the subject of religious belief, I may refer to its influence on the Press. In the early

CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTORS TO *PUNCH*

days of *Punch* one of its most brilliant contributors, "Dicky" Doyle, was a Catholic. On the question of the so-called Papal Aggression, Doyle tendered his resignation and retired from the celebrated Table. It was said in Bouverie Street that the great artist in black and white left the proprietors in a mess by failing to provide the expected drawing in the Almanack, but this rumour Doyle himself denied. Still, when I joined the staff I found the feeling very strong against Catholics. Sir Francis Burnand, thanks to the backing of Mark Lemon, had made his way to the Table after a pause of twenty years, and I followed him some fourteen or fifteen years later. Burnand and I had to stand shoulder to shoulder to guard against the violent attacks of one of the proprietors who yet, when not on the subject of religion, was one of the kindest, most genial and most Christian—so far as works were concerned—of men. When Burnand, who absolutely on account of his abilities could not be refused, was appointed Editor, he made it a rule to bar any attack upon creeds of all denominations.

In earlier days the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon and the Pope were personal objects of rather senseless ridicule. When Burnand assumed the reins this kind of "chaff" ceased. I remember that General Booth was treated with respect, and anything derogatory to the Anglican Church carefully excluded. When my brother Gilbert died, Burnand and I were the remaining Catholic members,

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but it really made no difference save that we were regarded as the experts on anything connected with the Roman ritual. One day there was a discussion at the Table about some ceremony belonging to the most ancient of the Christian Fathers. While Burnand and I were laying down the law *ex cathedra*, a "new boy" suddenly interposed and corrected us.

"Why, what on earth do you know about it?" asked Burnand in surprise.

"A good deal," returned *Mr. Punch's* latest recruit. "Considering, however, that I was educated at Stonyhurst, it is not so very surprising that I should."

The latest recruit had not been questioned relative to his religious belief before joining the Table! The condition of affairs had changed considerably since 1875, the date of my first appearance at the festive board in 10 Bouverie Street.

My experience as private secretary to the Duke of Norfolk was a very pleasant one. He was the kindest and most considerate of chiefs, and the two or three years I passed at work in St. James's Square or Arundel Castle stand out as the most delightful in my life. As Hon. Secretary of the Catholic Union of Great Britain, I came into contact with a large number of Members of Parliament, both Lords and Commons, and took the keenest interest in the politics of the day. It was before the advent of Mr. Parnell, and the question of

THE CHILDREN'S BANK

Home Rule had still to be raised. There was one of my duties about which I can speak without indiscretion, so I refer to it without hesitation.

The private secretary of a philanthropist is bound to come across a number of begging letter writers. I had the advantage during some years of knowing one of the secretaries of that capital institution, the Charity Organisation Society, and was amused and, of course, properly shocked to find the number of snares laid by the professional beggar for the wealthy tender-hearted. All sorts of benevolent institutions of a bogus character exist for the exclusive and personal advantage of their founders. One of these, to the best of my belief, was called "The Children's Bank," which was organised to allow the rich infants to succour the poor babies. What the rich put in, the poor were to draw out. As a matter of fact, to the best of my recollection, the entire proceeds were swept into the pockets of the founder, who backed up his title with a text, "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not."

Then there were all sorts of associations for helping the widow and the fatherless. Scores and hundreds of impostures had found their way into the hands of the Charity Organisation Society, the proceeds of prosecution. My friend the secretary—he has been dead for many years—showed me a list kept by a begging letter writer of the names of people to whom an appeal for help invariably met with a favourable reply. To my surprise, I

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found the names of a number of my acquaintances whose hearts I had always believed to be as hard as stone. I have had a theory which has lasted throughout my life that there is a great deal more truth than generally believed in the assertion that "the devil is not so black as he is painted." Of course, I do not wish to raise any doctrinal point in this statement. The poor devil of homely human nature is the particular devil to whom I desire to refer. As Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, the excellent dramatist, was once kind enough to say, "there is a good deal of human nature in a Cabinet Minister." I suggest that men and women, if they are not lunatics, when, of course, they are not responsible for their actions, are really "good sorts" *au fond*. The above opinions were confirmed by the line in the cadger's book that a man I had believed to be one of the meanest, close-fisted curmudgeons of a fellow that had ever walked the path of life, "was always good for a fiver."

There was one case of a begging letter impostor that has particularly lived in my memory. An ex-officer of cavalry who had done good service in India had lost his medals—he had appealed to Pall Mall for duplicates, and had received a civil official reply that if he would send such a sum the duplicates would be forwarded to him—he was terribly hard pressed, and he ventured to approach, etc., etc., and would be ever grateful, etc., etc.

When the official reply which accompanied this appeal was placed in my hands, I noticed that it

FRAUD WITH WAR MEDALS

was signed by a gentleman, a colleague of mine at the War Office, who to my certain knowledge I knew to have been dead for ten years. I held up the letter to the light and found that the original date had been altered for one of a later time. I went over to the War Office and found that the applicant was a man of very bad character who had been obliged to leave the service in disgrace ! However, he had earned his medals, but he had never paid for duplicates. Subsequent investigation proved that he had collected sums varying from £1 to £5 all round St. James's Square. My chief let him go on account of his services to his country to which the war medals testified. But he was ultimately brought to book. Many years afterwards I had to give evidence in connection with these very war medals. The prisoner in the dock had been up to his old games. I was shocked to find that a man who had once been an officer in a distinguished cavalry regiment had the appearance of the lowest type of tavern loungee. He had a poor wife, whom I recognised as a needy workwoman, who used to come to my room to know whether there was any answer to her letter to my chief asking for a sewing machine. So begging letter writing evidently ran in the family.

There was another case that occurs to me as I write these recollections, which have now certainly become more grave than gay. One of the most piteous letters I ever had was put into my hands by my chief, with a direction that I should forward

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an appropriate cheque. I suggested that I should make enquiries before carrying out the kind-hearted instruction. The condition of the ruined home was too horrible for belief. The father of the family—the writer of the letter—had a sick wife, his little children were starving, and every stick of furniture had been seized save the beds. It was suggested that the wife was down with scarlet fever. The doctor was not quite sure. The doctor was a good man, and the writer of the letter would like to pay him a portion of his bill. Then it was cruel to hear the little ones crying for food which he—the writer of the letter—could not afford to buy them. It was really a terrible letter. However, my good-natured chief left the matter in my hands, with the instruction that I must be expeditious in my enquiries, and not withhold the relief he was ready and anxious to afford a moment later than necessary. The next day was Sunday, so on the Sunday afternoon I went to the address on the top of the letter. I found that the writer of the letter was living in a row of very respectable looking cottages. His own showed no lack of modern luxuries. There were flower pots on the window sills and flowers hanging in front of the hall door. I met a policeman and asked if he knew anything of the person living in number so and so.

“Not much, sir,” replied the constable, “he gets a lot of registered letters so the postman tells us. And we in the Force don’t much like that. It seems suspicious, sir.”

A SUNDAY CALL

"Has his wife the scarlet fever?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"But the doctor has been in and out lately, hasn't he?"

"Never seen him, sir, when I have passed the house on my beat. Of course, he may have been at other times."

"Has he had the brokers in, who have gone off with his furniture?"

"Don't look much like it, sir, does it?" and the constable civilly touched his hat and strolled away.

I knocked at the door with the flowering creepers hanging over the portal, and my summons was answered by a neat little servant girl.

"Is Mr. Chose at home?" I asked. The maiden looked me over before answering and apparently was satisfied with my appearance; at any rate, she replied in the affirmative.

"I would like to see him."

"Well, sir, he is still at dinner. We always dine early on a Sunday. But if you like, sir, you can come upstairs in the drawing-room, sir."

I walked into a well-furnished house, with evidence of taste in many directions, and was ushered into a pleasant-looking room enough, full of photographs of the family of its proprietor.

"What name shall I say, sir?"

"Oh, you needn't give my name, thank you. I don't think Mr. Chose will know it."

"I say, sir," said the little servant anxiously,

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“ you haven’t come to borrow money, have you, sir ? ”

“ No, of course not,” I replied smiling. “ What made you think of that ? ”

“ Well, lots of them come to see master wanting to borrow money. He’s a good sort is master. But I tell you just now he’s really hard up, wants all he earns for himself, so don’t ask him for money. You’ll get me into trouble for showing you up if you do, and I do promise you it’s *no* use ; he’s really and truly precious hard up. Why, believe, even my wages—which he pays regular—are behind hand this time, I do promise you.”

I assured the little maid that I had not the least intention of appealing to Mr. Chose’s generosity. Then she left me with a look of unrest. Later on a rosy, cheery-looking man came in.

“ Glad to see you, sir. I don’t in the least know what you want to talk to me about, but I am glad to see you.” At this moment a well-dressed lady entered the room.

“ My wife, sir.”

I bowed and felt embarrassed. However, I took out the letter he had sent to my chief and showed it to him. He turned rather pale, but otherwise kept his composure.

“ Do you recognise that letter, Mr. Chose ? ”

“ To be sure I do. I sent it to the gentleman to whom it’s addressed last week. Dear me, and you have got it ! If you’ll come down to my study we will discuss it. Ladies,” this with a glance

A GENTLEMAN ONCE !

towards his wife, " don't like business. Perhaps it is, my dear sir, because they don't understand it. Ha, ha. Because they don't understand it."

I paid my respects to Mrs. Chose, who asked me to come to an " At home " she was giving in the following week.

" No crush, you know ; only tea and coffee and a few biscuits. We really cannot afford more. But I will introduce you to some nice girls. And if you are fond of music there will be a little singing. But mind, no crush."

I followed the master of the house into his study. It was full of letters ready to be posted. He sat down and was silent. At last he spoke.

" I really don't know what to say. It was good of you not to expose me before my wife. The poor woman knows nothing of my affairs. But what do you intend to do ? "

" Report progress to my chief."

" I see, and that will ruin me, I suppose. I must be off and continue this sort of thing " (he pointed to his letters) " somewhere else."

I walked towards the door. He followed me.

" It's no use asking for a chance, is it ? "

" What chance ? "

" Oh, I don't know. I'm in a terrible hole. Have been for years. I can't work. Don't know how. Lost everything I was worth on the turf and here I am ; must just live somehow you know."

" I shall leave the matter in the hands of my chief."

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

“ Heard that he was the best fellow that ever lived. Well, I suppose it can’t be helped. Thank you for calling. I say, you would scarcely believe it, but I was a gentleman—once ! ”

And so I left him. Later his letter went to the C.O.S., and I heard nothing further.

I have been Hon. Secretary on several occasions, notably to the Committee of the Queen’s Eightieth Birthday, with which I hope to deal in a future chapter. But perhaps the Hon. Secretaryship which yielded me the greatest pleasure was that of the Institute of Journalists by Royal Charter Incorporated, to which association I have for many years been proud to belong as a fellow. In 1900 I had the great honour of being elected President, and in 1901 I became, in succession to my friend the late Sir Wemyss Reid, Hon. Treasurer, a position to which I have been re-elected for five consecutive years. This being the case, it would scarcely be graceful, in a book of recollections that possibly will be the dying song of a swan (or goose), if I did not refer to a body which has treated me with so much kindly courtesy and put in me so much respectful trust. Of all the people I have met, and the pages of this volume will show that I have run across all sorts and conditions of men, I have never associated with better fellows from every point of view than my brother journalists. On account of my connection with the Institute, and before the Institute, with the Newspaper Society, of which body I was President in 1895—I have had

A PRACTICAL JOKE IN 1902

the opportunity of seeing my colleagues on and off duty for a number of years. There has been a tendency to friction of late between employés and proprietors. But the real genuine kindness of most of the great proprietors—men such as Lords Glenesk and Burnham and Mr. Frank Lloyd—has done much to remove this condition of affairs. My old friend Major Gratwicke, who occupied the Presidential chair last year, has also accomplished a great deal in the same direction. It was he who at the Conference held in Dublin obtained consent to a scheme of conciliation between proprietors and working journalists. I must confess that when I had the honour of figuring as President I was to some extent the victim of a practical joke.

In my address I impressed upon my friends, my brother journalists, the almost impossibility of proprietors doing any unkind action. I had so many precedents in support of my contention. There were not only the three names I have given but many others who were equally loyal to their employés. I instanced my own case and the kindness I and my father and my brother had experienced from the firm which for nearly thirty years had claimed and received our devoted services. I was moved by my eloquence, which was the more effective as it came from my heart of hearts. The practical joke which followed, and of which I was the amused victim, is too good for telling. Enough to say that I nearly died—of

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course, of laughter. However, the story to which I refer can only be appreciated by working journalists with a sense of kindly comedy. Although I claim to be a humourist, I am not sure that I can tell the story with all the points that my friends might make out of it. So I give up the task and drop it. It was good enough for *Punch*.

The Conference of the Institute of Journalists is always pleasant, because journalists of all political creeds meet together in amity. There is no professional jealousy, and if sometimes there is a little friction, I fancy it is caused by what may be termed the desire "to change the contents bill." What is the sensation of one season ceases even to be a feature in the next. During the many years I have held office in the Institute of Journalists I have found this to be the case. But I can testify to their kindness of heart and real fraternal feeling. The Orphan Fund and the Provident Fund are equally popular with the Defence Fund. For a long while the Orphan Fund would receive no "outside help," hoping to make it supported entirely by working journalists. The same policy dominates the Newspaper Press Fund, which appeals once a year at a Public Banquet to "outsiders." But these "outsiders" are connected in some way or another with Press life. The idea is that if the Public give to the Press, the Press will have to sell their independence to the Public. Even to this day one of the great leaders of opinion in the London newspaper world regards the "N.P.F."

THE SHADOW OF WATERLOO

with distrust on account of this annual appeal to semi-professional assistance.

Pressmen are much the same, I fancy, all the world over. In 1905 I had the advantage of attending as a British delegate "The International Congress of the Press" at Liège. There were some three hundred or four hundred delegates coming from all quarters of the globe to meet in Belgium. We had some very amusing incidents. The "Braves Belges," who would not consider a tour in their country complete without a visit to Brussels and Waterloo, put an excursion to these two places on the programme. To this arrangement the French delegates objected, on the score that they had no particular desire to see the battle-field on which Napoleon the Great was defeated. Their objection was the more marked as the Germans present were inclined to consider the battle a victory for their countrymen. The English were politely ignored. At that time the *entente cordiale* had not been proposed and accepted on both sides of the Straits of Dover. So at the last moment the French declared they would not go to Waterloo, and the Committee of Direction, anxious for a quiet life, cut the excursion out of the programme. Then the French delegates, believing that the visit was "off," made up their minds to go on their own account. The excursion was still retained on the *itinéraire*. An old colonel "in retreat," wearing the Belgian uniform of 1815, was to appear to act as a guide on the historic

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field of battle. This officer had not been informed of the change of programme. In due course the French contingent appeared, and to their surprise met a venerable warrior clad in the costume of nearly a century ago, eager to explain how Napoleon and his host were defeated. It is needless to say that scarcely had the lecture commenced when "reclamations" of the strongest character were heard, and the old colonel "in retreat" abruptly disappeared. I never was able to learn his subsequent fate.

There was another rather amusing incident. The delegates held a conference on the practice of duelling. A German moved that duelling was wrong and ought not to be allowed. The French went one better, and proposed that duelling ought not only to be disallowed, but papers reporting duels ought to be prosecuted. This suggestion was very unfavourably received. Even the British delegate (backed up by his American colleague) protested. It was pointed out amidst great applause that if there were a duel the Press should have the benefit of the reporting. It was a folly to throw away such a chance for the contents bill. Words grew warmer and warmer, until they came within measurable distance of blows. Delegates on all sides were seen exchanging cards of address, probably with a view to hostile encounter in Ostend or the ever-faithful Boulogne. Fortunately the storm which was never very large, resolved itself into a hurricane in a teacup.

THE UNION OF "DEAD HEADS"

For the moment my French colleagues regarded me as an enemy. Some of them had heard that the English, too, were at Waterloo, but the Germans politely denied the statement. I remained silent, and the affair was soon ended. The next day I made friends with the French, who had already become reconciled to the Germans. The bond of union was a common badge, which we all had to use to obtain admission to the Kursaal at Ostend, where Caruso was announced as a singer. We had but one nationality as—"dead heads!"

CHAPTER IV

FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH PRINTERS' INK

The Firm of "S. and O."—A Story of the Battle of Inkermann—The Fight between the *Alabama* and the *Kerseage*—A Family Likeness—The Editorship of the *Oriental Budget*—A Privileged Libeller—Amateur Theatricals—The Caste of "The Lady of Lyons"—How to Play the *Third Officer* effectively without Gagging—Meeting with F. C. B.—Stories of the Deep.

IT was while I was coquetting, so to speak, with the Civil Service that I had my first experience of interviewing, an art then in its infancy. A schoolfellow of my brother's, who was the son of an East Indian official, frequently spent some of his holidays with us in the absence of his parents in Calcutta. This gentleman had become a partner in the firm of Saunders and Otley, and did his best to help me. "S. and O.," as they familiarly were called, had passed rather a strange career. At one time they were quite a leading firm, the equal of Murray, Blackwood and Bentley. It was in the days of their prime that the well-known story of the quarrel between the infuriated author and the passive publisher came into existence.

"Sir," cried the irate man of letters, rushing into the sanctum of the firm and addressing one of the partners, "if you are Saunders, curse Otley, and if you are Otley, curse Saunders!"

The originals had disappeared and in their place were Messrs. Hudson (my East Indian friend) and

INTERVIEWING AFTER A BATTLE

J. W. Robins, a nephew of the great auctioneer. The predominating partner was Hudson, who was full of ideas. When I reached man's estate he had just started a magazine which he called the *British Army Review*, to which I contributed my earliest papers. It was towards the end of the Civil War in America, when the *Alabama*, the Confederate privateer, was doing an immense amount of damage to the Federal shipping. He sent for me and asked me if I would like to write an account of the battle between the *Alabama* and the *Kerseage*, which had just taken place, at first hand. I asked what did he mean by at first hand.

"Well, as if you were on the spot," he replied ; "all you have to do is to go down to Southampton and see the survivors of the crew. The *Alabama*, as you will have read in the morning papers, sunk. All you have got to do is to get the narrative of the fight out of anyone who went down in her and came up again."

I accepted the conditions, and this was my first effort at interviewing. The result of my labours reminded me rather of the Crimean War historian's attempts to get at the truth about the battle of Inkermann. The historian came across a private in the Grenadier Guards who had taken part in the famous engagement.

"So you were there, my man," said Kinglake ; "now tell me, in your own words, the story of the battle of Inkermann."

"Well, it was in this way," returned the

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Guardsmen. "We were called up precious early and found ourselves in a fog. Then we peppered the Rooshians and they peppered us. Then me and my rear-rank man, Sammy Larkings, saw a Rooshian lying still. ' 'Tis a pity to leave his boots, Sammy,' I sang out. 'Yes, it is,' says my rear-rank man. So we took 'em off. When we was doing of it the Rooshian came to life and said (so far as we could understand his lingo), 'What the blooming Hades are you a-doing with my boots?' And that's about all I know of the battle of Inkermann."

Well, when I got to Southampton I was fortunate enough to run across the boatswain of the *Alabama*, and asked him to take a late breakfast with me at Radley's Hotel. He was an Englishman, and accepted the invitation. I found him a very decent fellow indeed, and to my great relief a temperance man. Having an impression that the correct thing to do with seafarers was to offer grog, I suggested that we should take a glass of that delicious drinkable together to wet our friendship.

"Grog!" he cried, "why, I haven't touched it since I was three years old!"

I was glad to learn that he had abandoned drink at so early an age, and I said so. I explained further that had I indulged in liquors at that time of day I would not subsequently have been able to answer for the consequences. This remark brought us to the purport of my visit to Southampton.

THE STORY OF A SEA FIGHT

"I am not sure I can help you very much, sir," said he, pouring out some tea and helping himself to kidneys and bacon; "all I can say is that most of our crew were Englishmen—like myself—and we had no personal spite against the Yankees. That made it harder when they fired upon us when we surrendered."

"The *Alabama* did surrender then? I thought she went down with her colours nailed to the mast."

"Nailed to the mast! What folly! We should have only gone down with flying colours had we forgotten to lower them. But no, the captain said to me, 'Just haul down that bit of bunting,' says he. And when it had been hauled down, and they still kept blazing away, he said, 'Bless my soul, I am surprised. They aren't English.' That's all he said, and that's all I can say."

"But cannot you give me some particulars? Something I can write about?"

"Well, of course, we had to attend to business, but when we had any leisure we used to look at a smart little yacht full of ladies which was steaming round about the *Kerseage* and us to see the fun. 'Them's English,' said I, and I heard they were."

"You mean the occupants of the *Deerhound*?"

"That's the name, sir. It was fortunate for me, sir, that the *Deerhound* did come out to see the fun. When I was sent down with the *Alabama*, I was picked up by the *Deerhound*, and the young ladies were very kind to me."

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My seafaring friend smiled and stroked his bushy beard under his close-shaven upper lip.

"I did laugh, sir," said he. "Fancy coming out on a Sunday morning to see a sea battle! Why, a shot from either side might have sent the *Deerhound* under. And, mind you, we hadn't much time to consider who we were laying on. We gave it to the Yankees without fear or favour, and one of our thirty-two pounders might have sent her to the bottom."

At this length of time I cannot remember the weight of the *Alabama* guns, so I cannot be sure that my friend the boatswain spoke of thirty-two pounders. When my poor brother Albert was a midshipman on board the H.E.I.C.'s ship *Punjaub* in 1855, that respectable paddle-steamer carried twelve sixty-eight pounders.

"And what more can you tell me of the battle?" I asked.

Then he explained how the *Alabama* had taken refuge in Cherbourg, and the *Kerseage* had waited, like a cat on the alert for a mouse, outside the port in readiness to fall upon her. At length they had got to close quarters, with the result that the *Alabama* disappeared beneath the waves.

"We had a very happy time of it while it lasted," said the boatswain when he had got to the end of his story. "Our captain was a first-rate fellow—an Englishman—and I had never had a better set of shipmates."

I had made some notes while my friend was

A FAMILY LIKENESS

talking, but on the whole my list of "useful hints," from a professional point of view, was far from satisfactory. In those days the gentle art of interviewing was, as I have said, in its infancy and required development. Nowadays my friend the boatswain would have been overwhelmed with descriptive writers. Strange to say that, so far as I could discover, I was the only "interviewer" at Southampton at the time, and I was there not strictly as a newspaper man, but rather as an amateur seeking to obtain materials for a magazine article. I wrote the paper, and it duly appeared, to my very great satisfaction.

À propos of my story of the battle between the *Kerseage* and the *Alabama*, I have a recollection which can be scarcely classified as either grave or gay, but simply as interesting. The officer in command of the Federal vessel was called Winslow, and my second son bore that family name in honour of his grandfather, the late Dr. Forbes Benignus Winslow, to whom I have already referred. My son and I were visiting the large building close to Wellington Barracks which was erected to contain a panorama of "Niagara" and which is now, I believe, occupied by motor cars. My old friend, the late John Hollingshead, was the originator of the scheme for popularizing America in England. It was a Press-view day, and as we passed through the turnstile the custodian spoke to me.

"Beg your pardon," said he, "but is that young gentleman with you an American?"

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"No," I replied, "why do you ask the question?"

"Because he is the image of my old commander. I was a sailor once, sir, and he is the image of my old commander. If it is not taking a liberty, may I ask your name, sir?"

"Not at all. I am Mr. à Beckett, the editor of the *Sunday Times*, and this is my younger son. We are both Englishmen. And who may you be?"

"Well, sir, I am not quite what I used to be, or I should be at work at something better than this. But why I spoke to you was because that son of yours is the image of my old commander on the *Kerseage*, Admiral Winslow."

My connection with the firm of Saunders and Otley led to my first editorship. I became associated with a monthly periodical called the *Oriental Budget*, which circulated largely in India, China, Australia, Canada and the Colonies generally. The remuneration I received for my services was not sufficient—without augmentation from other sources to render me a millionaire. For composing some thirty or forty columns of matter of the measure of the *Athenæum* I received forty shillings. But it was excellent practice, and I perfectly revelled in my work. I treated the paper as a review devoted to Politics, Literature, the Drama, Services and Art. Naturally I found no little assistance from those friends of "the news editor," scissors and paste.

In those distant days I was an amateur actor,

THE EDITOR OF THE *O.B.*

and I used to devote a portion of my forty columns to notices of the performances in which I myself took part. There were several troupes at the time. One was led by Mrs. Milner Gibson, the wife of the then President of the Board of Trade; another by Miss Aylmer Blake, a much respected novelist, who, as Mrs. Aylmer Gowing, only died a couple of years ago; the third was associated with the late Sir Charles Young, and Messrs. Herman Merivale and Quintin Twiss. Then my old friend, Sir F. C. Burnand, had formed the A.D.C. at Cambridge, and "The Old Stagers" and "The Windsor Strollers" were in existence as they are to this day. I had taken part in a performance at the Haymarket Theatre for some charitable object or other, and I devoted a portion of my space in the *Oriental Budget* to a notice of the proceedings. By this time the *O.B.* had become the property of a company of limited liability, with its old promoter, Mr. Hudson, still to the fore. This gentleman asked me to call upon him.

"I say," said he, "I have been so precious busy lately that I have let you do what you please with the *Budget*, and you have got me into a nice mess with my Directors."

"How's that?" I replied; "why I thought the last number was unusually good and quite worth the money paid for the literary matter."

"Of course, you don't get much, but the little you have would be dear at the price if it landed us in an action for libel."

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I felt rather uncomfortable. I knew that I allowed considerable latitude to my pen, but I was not conscious of having "gone" for anyone in particular. So I asked for "further and better particulars."

"Look at this notice of a charitable performance. You speak of one of the actors who took part in it—fortunately you don't give his name—as 'one of the worst players who ever appeared on the stage before a British audience to insult them by his utter incompetency.' You say that he 'shrunk away discomfited into the green-room.' Now that is distinctly libellous."

"But it is quite true. The amateur to whom I refer was as bad as bad could be. He was indeed."

"The greater the truth the greater the libel," said Mr. Hudson sententiously. "You may be sure he will have us up and we shall be cast in heavy damages."

"Oh, no, you won't," I replied laughing; "the actor I went for—I rather fancy I called him 'a discomfited buffoon' somewhere—was myself! I always try to be impartial."

Recollection leads to recollection, and as I for the moment am speaking of myself as an amateur actor, I may recall my performance in "The Lady of Lyons" when I was the editor of the *Glow-worm*, an evening paper published in the "sixties." I had the reputation, I deeply regret to say, of being fond of "playing the fool," and therefore a

SMALL BUT IMPORTANT

dangerous man. However, one of the troupe of amateurs was anxious to get me into the caste, possibly with a view to a good notice in the paper of which I had the honour to be conductor. So, after some negotiation, I was entrusted with the small but important part of *Third Officer*. I say "small" because all I had to say (as cut) was "Promotion is rapid in the French army—I was made a lieutenant yesterday." I add "important" because it was the duty of the *Third Officer* to assist in explaining to the audience how the peasant, *Claude Melnotte*, of Act I, had become Colonel in Act III. So I was put in the bills as *Third Officer* on the understanding that on no account would I "gag," a technical term meaning that I would increase my words with the assistance of my own invention. Perish the thought! Fancy the audacity of attempting to supplement the immortal lines of the first Lord Lytton! I had had my share of audacity, but, of course, I would not think of such a thing! I was shocked at the notion, and the management "apologised" very properly.

But, although I gave my word not to "gag" as an Englishman—who scorns to be a slave—I had the right to give my own reading of the part. I hurried to the New Royalty Theatre and lagged behind when my colleagues the First and Second Officers were being "made up." The first was turned out by the late Mr. Clarkson as a gallant young soldier of about five-and-twenty, and the

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Second Officer as some years his junior. The two gallant gentlemen left the room and I was alone with the late Mr. Clarkson. He was about to "make me up" as a stripling of seventeen when I interposed.

The third act was reached, and the *First* and *Second Officers* appeared in all the freshness of youth. Then there was a pause and a very old soldier tottered on to the stage supported by a staff. He stroked his long white beard and his face beamed with a smile of great satisfaction.

"Promotion is rapid in the French Army," said he, with a quavering voice. "I was made a lieutenant yesterday!"

Fortunately the performer of *Claude Melnotte*—who was of a choleric temperament—had other things to attend to, and consequently I was not killed on the spot. I deserved to be.

It was in 1864 when I first met Francis Cowley Burnand, who was my first editor when I joined the staff of the *Glow-worm* (subsequently to succeed him) and with whom I served, first as colleague, and then as assistant editor under his supreme command of nearly thirty years, on the staff of *Punch*. From the first I had a great admiration for his talents. When my brother Gilbert and I wrote those unfortunate "Comic Guides to the Royal Academy" we sent him presentation copies of our brochure. So it was a great delight to me to meet him and greet him, as I did through the agency of our friend in

AMATEURS AT CAMPDEN HOUSE

common, the late Francis Albert Marshall, or, as he was to his intimates, Frank Marshall. "F.A.M." was the son of the member for one of the divisions of Westmoreland, and one of the best of fellows. I had met him in my Civil Service days, when he was in the Record Office and I in Pall Mall. He was a dramatist and an amateur actor, and so was I. One of my earliest recollections connected with our acquaintance was a performance given in the grounds of Campden House, after the mansion had been burned to the ground. It was for some Italian charity or other, and Mr. Thomas Gibson Bowles, Frank Marshall and I consented to give our valuable services in a short piece called "The Port Admiral" by the aforesaid "T.G.B." We had believed that there would have been a proper stage and all the accessories of a "fit up" theatre. Through some want of forethought on the part of the management, we found everything in the rough. There was no stage, and we had to play *al fresco*. Since then some very charming performances have been given with a natural background of shrubs and trees. Only last autumn I had the pleasure of seeing a most delightful entertainment of the kind at the Viceregal Lodge, Dublin, when I was attending the Conference of the Institute of Journalists in Ireland. But our performance in the grounds of Campden House was of quite a different character. It was inclement weather, and we had to dress more or less in the open. We had a very select audience,

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composed chiefly of a small band of stall-holders. I am extremely fond of children, and it is on my conscience that I spoke quite roughly to one little lady who tried hard to get me to purchase a wax doll on the score "that it was only a guinea." Neither Frank Marshall, nor I, nor the author played with much enthusiasm, and I am afraid "The Port Admiral" suffered in consequence. We three were not in the best of tempers, and the play, although avowedly comic, on that occasion could have scarcely been accurately described as "of rather a humorous character." However, we were much comforted by the complimentary applause of a lady and gentleman in the first row of chairs. We discovered afterwards that they were Mario and Grisi.

My introduction to Francis Cowley Burnand—who I am happy to say belongs, like myself, to the minority—led to my meeting a number of his friends. One of the earliest was the late Montagu Williams, with whom I had also come in contact when we were brother members of the Committee of the Thatched House Club, into which the old Civil Service Club had developed. It was not long before his death that I was travelling between Dover and London in a compartment filled with fellow-passengers. I was reading a newspaper, when my attention was attracted to a discussion about the merits and demerits of Metropolitan police magistrates. The gentleman seated next to me was good enough to say that he considered

"AN ILLUSTRIOUS STRANGER"

Montagu Williams was the best on the bench; but he rather disappointed me by adding that he did not think much of Metropolitan police magistrates as a whole.

Considering that my father had been a Metropolitan police magistrate, I thought it my filial duty to defend them, and spoke rather warmly on their behalf, saying that their duties were of the most arduous and delicate character, and that there had never been a case of an indifferent "beak" from the time of Fielding to the present day. I spoke so warmly upon the subject that I quite stopped the flow of conversation, and the situation became embarrassing. However, I laughed at my own enthusiasm, and turned to some subject dealt with in the newspaper I had been reading, and talk was resumed with great good humour. I noticed that my fellow-passenger seated next to me seemed a little depressed, so I addressed him when the conversation in the other part of the carriage had become general.

"I am afraid I spoke rather too warmly just now in defence of the Metropolitan police magistrates," I began.

"Not at all, sir, not at all. I am a member of the legal profession myself and quite agree with you. They are a most excellent set of gentlemen, and, as you observed, always have been."

I was greatly gratified at this appreciation, and went a little further in my apologetic explanation.

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"The fact is, my father was a Metropolitan police magistrate."

"Oh, indeed, sir. I congratulate you, sir. May I have the honour of learning your name?"

Looking round I was rather reluctant to abandon my *incognito*. I suppose I am not more retiring than other men, but I thought it possible that, if my companions learned that they had a rather distinguished personage in their midst, it might overawe them. So I said in an undertone that could only be heard by my next-seat neighbour, "My name is à Beckett."

"Oh, indeed, sir, very pleased to meet you indeed. Your name is very familiar to me, very familiar to me indeed."

"You are very kind, sir," I replied, in a tone of amiable condescension, "most kind and complimentary."

"Not at all, sir. With such a name it is an honour to be even in the smallest degree associated."

I again thanked my companion and congratulated myself on my reticence, for I noticed that the announcement of my identity had made him—like the lady who had struck the last chord at the organ—ill at ease. He was evidently overwhelmed, so to speak, with my personality and relapsed into silence.

"I know where I have heard your name," he cried suddenly as we passed Canterbury. "Why, Thomas à Beckett was murdered in that Cathedral."

A STORY OF EDMUND YATES

Of course, that is how your name became so familiar to me, sir. To be sure, Thomas à Beckett was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral."

I admitted that he was quite right, although I had not expected exactly this particular association of ideas. Then we began reading our papers. After a while he chuckled and once more addressed me.

"I say, my dear sir, the name of à Beckett is better known in Canterbury than in London, isn't it?"

Quite true, but somehow or other I could not help considering my fellow-passenger not only an ass, but a silly one. Even now I am not sure that I have any inclination to revise my estimation of his abilities.

Amongst others whose acquaintance I made about this time was the late Edmund Yates, who held a position of trust in the Post Office. I fancy he was at the head of the Dead Letter Department in St. Martin's le Grand. One of his duties was to discover misappropriation of effects temporarily in the custody of the Postmaster-General, and to enable him to perform this service satisfactorily a number of police constables were placed at his disposal.

One day, during official hours—so the story goes—an irate publisher called upon Edmund Yates to complain that the copy he had promised of a work had not turned up to time. The Government official courteously explained that

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he could not enter into matters of a private character when he was serving the public. At another time Mr. Yates would be delighted to speak to Mr. Chose, but just at the moment Mr. Chose must really excuse him, "he was busy, very busy."

But the publisher was unreasonable, and insisted upon airing his grievance. Yates had promised to send in the last chapter by such a date, and now the date was passed, and there was no conclusion, etc., etc., etc.

The novelist, plus Government official, for a long time bore the torrent of complaints without moving a hair. Yates, although a terrible man when he was seriously quarrelling, was *au fond* good-natured. He felt, perhaps, that he had not treated the indignant publisher quite nicely. But, at last, he could not stand the abuse longer. So he stopped his work and turned upon his assailant. "Now, Mr. Chose, I must really request you to be off. I can't have you staying here all day. Now please go at once."

"I won't go at once. I will stay all day. Now what do you say to that."

"Why, sir, as you say you will stay all day, by Jove you shall."

Mr. Chose was rather surprised, and Yates resumed his work. A little later the publisher got up and went to the door.

"You told me I should stay all day, and now I tell you I won't," and he left the room.

A LORD MAYOR IN WAITING

The moment the door had closed behind his unwelcome visitor Yates sprang up and approached a speaking tube which was in communication with a room close to the entrance door. He whistled down.

"Will you please arrest the person who is leaving my room and keep him in custody until you hear further."

"Certainly, sir," came the reply through the speaking tube.

Yates thought no more about the incident, having a lot of official work to demolish before the welcome hour of departure reached him. He was just putting on his coat at a quarter-past six when a whistle came through the speaking tube.

"Yes," said Yates, listening. "What is it?"

"If you please, sir, what are we to do with the gentleman we arrested this morning at a quarter-past eleven. He has been making a terrible to-do all day because he says some friends expected him to lunch at the Mansion House at half-past one."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Yates. "I had forgotten all about him. Well, you can let him go now, and tell him, with my compliments, if he looks sharp and takes a hansom to the Mansion House, he may yet catch the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs at tea."

But I must add to this anecdote as an epilogue "so the story goes."

Another distinguished Civil Servant was Anthony Trollope, whose novels were frequent and

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voluminous. My friend, the late Tom Taylor, who always took a kind interest in his staff, informed me that "A.T." used to write invariably in bed. "I do so myself," said Mr. Taylor. "I invariably have pens, ink and paper in readiness, and when I wake I set to work."

As it happened, when this conversation took place, I was a very light sleeper after 4 o'clock. As a mere boy, when I edited the *Glow-worm*, it was necessary to be on the alert at latest at 8 a.m. Unfortunately, I belonged to a very late club called the Raleigh, and when the labours of the day were over I used to go to this *cercle* to have a long chat with my "pals" upon things in general and the state of the nation in particular. We were very careful of the gas and used usually to wait until the lamps were extinguished before taking our departure.

I was always—or nearly always—in bed by 4.30 or 5 a.m. In those days I had rooms in Palace Chambers, 88 St. James', which were conveniently close to Regent Street and Waterloo Place, the *habitat* of the Raleigh. Then would come the printer's devil at 8 a.m., after I had had about four hours' sleep, to call my attention to the requirements of the *Glow-worm*. Thus it came that I grew acclimatised to four hours' sleep a day, and even nowadays I do not seem to require more.

"Quite enough, my dear fellow," said Tom Taylor enthusiastically; "make it a point to go to bed at midnight, wake up at four, and do at

THE "SAVAGE" AND THE "ARUNDEL"

least four hours' good work before breakfast. It is what I have done for years, and it is the custom too of Anthony Trollope."

I must confess that I certainly have managed to get through an immense amount of writing between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. Only the other day the doctors were saying—they are always saying something—that the early morning was the best time for writing, and that you ought to have your body perfectly at rest to give your mental faculties fair play. So I have the satisfaction, at the approach of middle age, to feel that all my life unconsciously I have been acting under doctors' orders.

From what I have written it will be seen that I have been fond of clubs more or less all my life. As an original member of the "Civil Service" at the age of seventeen, I was launched into clubland at an unusually early age. Then I joined two clubs of the Bohemian type—the "Savage" and the "Arundel." The first has changed its character since the good old days of shirt-sleeves and yards of clay. I call them "the good old days" because in the early history of a *cercle* which has now become known far and near, only genuine brain-workers were admitted. In those times, forty or fifty years ago, the "Savage" "kept" in Covent Garden. Now it was in Henrietta Street, now in the Hotel attached to Evans' Supper Rooms. When Tom Robertson wrote his first great success, "Society," for the little theatre off the Tottenham Court Road—now the Scala—the Savage Club was

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supposed to be represented in a scene called the Owls' Roost. There was an incident which used to cause roars of laughter. One of the members wishes to borrow half-a-crown. He asks a friend for the coin, "Haven't got it myself, but I will get it for you." Friend asks another member and the same reply is returned, "Haven't got it myself, but I'll get it for you." Number 2 asks Number 3. Same reply. So it goes on from member to member until the very last applicant meets with a satisfactory response. Then the half-crown passes from hand to hand until the original applicant receives his loan. This piece was memorable for introducing to the public a gentleman as a most admirable character actor, who until then had shone principally in burlesque. My friend, Mr. John Hare, came suddenly to the fore in the rôle of a sleepy peer. For a series of plays there was always a part of a somewhat similar character. After "Society" came "Ours," "School," "Caste" and "Play." In each of these Mr. Hare made his mark. He was the aristocrat to the life, except in "Caste," when he surprised everyone by his versatility by suddenly appearing as a democratic little gasfitter.

It was in the Savage Club that Tom Robertson met an amiable brother dramatist who made a pun that would have caused the shade of the late Dr. Johnson to shiver.

"What are you going to call your new play, Tom?"

MODERN PRESSMEN

“ Why, ‘ Ours.’ ”

“ ‘ Ours ! ’ Why, I thought it was Yours ! ”

In those days the Cockney pronunciation of “ yours ” rhymed with “ tears.”

All the world knows that since the foundation of the Savage Club, I believe in the early fifties (when I was a boy at school), it has grown and prospered. The picture of the “ Owls’ Roost ” is out of date. The journalist as drawn by Tom Robertson scarcely exists. Here and there may be found a free and easy pressman of the very old school, but the Institute of Journalists with its annual conference, its stately proceedings and its general high respectability, has revolutionised Fleet Street. I am happy to think that the feeling of good fellowship still exists with a touch of what may be called “ the silk hat and frock coat element ” thrown in. The newspaper man of to-day is worthier than ever of the title of “ Gentleman of the Press.”

Besides the “ Savage ” was the “ Arundel.” It was located in the early sixties at the bottom of Salisbury Street, Strand, and the story went that an engraving depicting one of Landseer’s dogs showed a watcher for the commencement of the promised embankment of the Thames. All the dramatists of the day belonged to it, and all the dramatic critics, Burnand, Byron, Frank Talford, Tom Robertson, George Rose (Arthur Sketchley) and James Albury were members. About this time the late John Hollingshead published in the first

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of the sixpenny magazines, *The Broadway*, an article called "Dramatic Critics Criticised." It was rather severe and those who were singled out for censure were loud in their complaints. I remember that I personally was particularly indignant. I was not only the Editor of the *Glow-worm*, but also its dramatic critic.

"Really," said Tom Robertson, "I don't see what you have to cry about. Why, he never mentions your name from first to last."

"No!" I thundered, "he doesn't!"

Perhaps there is nothing more galling to a man of the pen than the killing attack of absolute silence. I felt Hollingshead's ignorement more than I can say. For the sake of our friendship he might at least have called me a donkey.

In compiling these recollections, I find, looking back through a long series of years, that most of my leisure time before I attained the dignity of a paterfamilias (with all the responsibilities attached to so honourable a position) was spent in one or another of my clubs. I find that one year I was on the books of thirteen—a baker's dozen. Under these circumstances it may not be inappropriate if I devote a chapter to the subject of the English *cercle*. It has often occurred to me that a really exhaustive work upon "Clubs, Ancient and Modern" would be most instructive and amusing. Some day, perhaps, I may attempt the task if I am not anticipated by some more energetic and worthier writer.

CHAPTER V

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CLUB

The Club as a Home from Home—Political and Service Clubs—Early Struggles—The Duties of a Librarian—Supper and Breakfast—Bogus Clubs—Law and Licence—Opening a Discussion at a Ladies' Club—The Triumph of Buns—Seniors *versus* Juniors—Ladies' Clubs at their Best—The Select Club under the Clock Tower.

CERTAINLY an average Londoner—say a man not “in the street” exactly, but lounging “in a West-End square”—would say that one of the greatest movements in social London during the last five years has been the rapid development of the *cercle*. Perhaps it would be better to say the Club, as that institution is essentially English, while the *cercle* suggests a table d'hôte, tables in every apartment devoted to play, and a “*salon de lecture*” elevated “*au 5me.*” It has been asserted that, if the world were to come to an end, leaving two English survivors, they would immediately dine together and make speeches in celebration of the event. Were there half-a-dozen left alive of the same nationality after such a disaster, and sufficient time given them to organise a committee, they would undoubtedly establish a club. Very likely, if the governing body consisted of three, they would “pill” at least one of the outsiders. Well, in this book of recollections before marking the changes that have occurred during recent times, it may be well to glance at the conditions of our

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“homes from home” when the last curtain was rung down on that comedy-tragedy, the dawn of the nineteen hundreds.

It is a little difficult to classify the various branches of club-house. Speaking generally, there are the political and the non-political. Then the non-political may be subdivided into the Service, the Literary, the Clerical, the Social and Sporting. I will glance briefly at some of them.

Of course, the Political—as we are a very serious people when we, so to speak, are *en grande tenue*—takes precedence of every other kind of *cercle*. The Carlton and the Reform are, and no doubt ever will be, the leading political clubs. Others there are having what may be termed “social traditions” with distinctly political leading. The survivors of the old eighteenth century, taking their titles from past but not forgotten head waiters, are specimens of the *cercles* to which I refer. There are White’s, Brook’s, Arthur’s and Boodle’s. If one turns to that excellent publication, “Who’s Who Year Book,” under the heading of “Clubs and their Secretaries,” one will find only one of those I have mentioned has a political bias added to its “social” claims. Still, it is fairly well understood that men of extremely advanced political opinions on “the wrong side of the House” would have a very slender chance of successfully running the gauntlet of the ballot box in all of those clubs where the “right side of the House” had been by custom ascertained.

PHIL MAY AT THE DEVONSHIRE

There are two political clubs, both of recent birth, that are still in what may be termed a condition of transition. I refer to the National Liberal Club and the Devonshire. We find, at the time when the kingdom of Ireland was influencing the destinies of "the sister peninsula" of Great Britain, politics were just a little mixed. The National Liberal Club is delightfully situated, capitably managed and, perhaps on account of its Hibernian members, one of the cheeriest of caravanserais. But for a long time it could not be taken quite seriously. There were eccentric stories about it, possibly started by that reckless *raconteur*, Ben Trovato, Esq. And having said this, I hasten to add that, as I write, I believe there is no more admirable institution than the National Liberal Club. Having made this avowal, I feel there will be no lack of delicacy on my part if I accept once again the hospitality of its excellent cuisine at the hands of the best of its members. And all its members (without an exception) are the best.

Taking the Devonshire, I find it is labelled "Liberal," although I believe there is a certain latitude permitted in political opinions.

One of my friends, the late Phil May, was a prominent and popular member, who used the Club frequently, and for a long series of years I had the privilege of sitting near him at the *Punch* dinner. In the evolution of that mighty creation of art and heart, the weekly cartoon, I never

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noticed that my friend showed any strong bias in favour of "the mighty voice of the public," or whatever may be the pervading "shibboleth" of the Liberal cause. I confess I took rather a personal interest in this club—of which I have not the honour of being a member—because I knew something of the fortunes of its predecessors. Once, so tradition relates, the house was occupied by a number of exceedingly deserving gentlemen, but their support was scarcely sufficient to keep the institution with its head above water. On one occasion, so the story goes, a person of decidedly plebeian appearance established himself in the morning-room. A member of the Committee entered the apartment, and was surprised to find so strange a looking creature confronting him. He noticed that the man was smoking a clay pipe—against the rules—and was wearing a smashed-in bowler. The Committee-man knew that, with the view of securing as many members as possible, the limits of the qualifications of candidates had been very widely extended. But he thought this man would not have been accepted by his colleagues at the Council Board if they had known of his personal appearance. He determined to set his mind at rest by discovering whether or not the gentleman—a courtesy title—was an intruder.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for speaking to you without an introduction, but as one of the

AN EXTRAORDINARY HON. MEMBER

Committee of this Club, may I venture to ask if you are a member ? ”

“ No, I ain’t,” was the curt reply, and the person in the smashed-in bowler blew a volume of smoke (of indifferent quality) from his ill-looking cutty.

“ Then, sir,” said the Committee-man with great dignity, “ I must request that you instantly withdraw. Are you not aware that you are a trespasser and can be punished by law ? ”

“ No, I am aware of nothing of the sort,” answered the person, taking a legal-looking document from a greasy pocket. “ I’ve a better right to be here than you have, and if you want me to go, Guv’nor, you’d better pay me out. I’m the man in possession ! ”

The Committee-man was a person of resource. He knew that the funds of the Club were in a condition that would bear no strain without disturbing the equilibrium of its pass-book ; so he called immediately a committee meeting.

“ Gentlemen, or rather Gentleman, as you, sir, and I form the necessary quorum,” he began, “ I beg to report that we have a visitor in the morning-room of a most undesirable character. He is ‘ in ’ for some tradesman who has no sense of decency. Under the circumstances, I beg to move that during his stay the man in possession be elected an honorary member.”

And the resolution was carried unanimously.

Then there was another story, that when it was

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considered advisable to change the name of the Club, to give it a new start, it should be re-christened "Black's," as the opposite in every particular to "White's." Once more, when it was still in low water, a member of the Committee—a merchant in second-hand clothes—offered to lend the Club (for a merely nominal pecuniary consideration) a collection of really handsome and valuable overcoats.

"Look here, my dears," he is reported to have said affectionately to his colleagues, "pay me five bob a week and I will dress up the hall pegs with one of the finest collection of overcoats you have ever seen."

"What for?" asked the Chairman.

"Don't you see what for?" continued the merchant in second-hand clothes. "Anyone who comes into the hall will think, 'Bless me, these coats—some of 'em with fur collars—must belong to the members!' Then he will say, 'Lord, bless me, I'll join.' There, my dears, make it five and sixpence a week and I will throw in gratis two dozen very decent umbrellas!"

But it is said the valuable suggestion was declined. Speaking personally, I believe that the story is purely imaginary. Still, for some time it had credence, and it is quite a remarkable thing, considering this legend about its site, that the Devonshire Club should be in every respect so highly respectable.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Service

THACKERAY AND "THE RAG"

Clubs were holding their own fairly well. Leaving out the "Guards'," which was an earlier creation, the "Senior" headed the list. Then came the "Junior," then after a pause the "Army and Navy," and after a more considerable pause the "Naval and Military." Of these the "Junior" was scarcely a nickname. The official title of its elder was the "United Service," which could be scarcely described as the "Senior" until the "Junior" came into existence. The large Club, however, at the corner of Pall Mall, immediately opposite what used to be the War Office, was called "The Rag." There has been from time to time a good deal of discussion as to the cause of this familiar designation. Some say it was taken from the remains ("the rag") of the regimental colours. Others (and I think they are right) declare that it was bestowed upon the warriors by William Makepeace Thackeray, who used to draw with pen and pencil those comical soldiers, "Rag" and "Famish." I am afraid Michael Angelo Titmarsh, although he loved soldiers—remember Colonel Newcome, and even that heavy dragoon, Colonel Rawdon Crawley—had no very great opinion of their literary ability. A story has come down that I fancy owed its birth to the lively imagination of the great humourist. For a number of years there has been an interchange of courtesies—when the club houses close for alterations and repairs—between a great literary centre and the house of soldiers and sailors. On one occasion the *littérateurs* were the guests of the warriors. The scene

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of the story was the library. A great ecclesiastic, accustomed to the dignity of the curator of books over the way, was writing an article of considerable importance for the *Quarterly Review*. He beckoned to a waiter, and addressed him.

"I am very anxious," said his Lordship, "to find a volume which I believe is on the shelves. Do you think the librarian would know where to lay his hand upon it?"

"I daresay he would, my lord."

"Well, I would like to ask him, as the article I am writing is of more or less ephemeral interest, and should not be delayed for a further period of three months. Perhaps you would kindly ask him."

"Certainly, my lord," said the waiter, and the name of the book was mentioned for his information.

"Stay!" exclaimed the ecclesiastic, moved by an after thought, "although I am most anxious to find the volume, I would on no account whatever break in upon his attention if I thought it would be inconvenient."

A vision arose before the worthy divine of the librarian engaged upon some work of an important literary character. The waiter considered for a moment, and then answered confidentially.

"Well, if you ask me, my lord, I think it would be a little inconvenient to go to him just now."

"Indeed! What is the librarian doing?"

“THE OLD CONSTITUTIONAL FORCE”

“Well, my lord, he is very much engaged just now in the coffee-room *a-carving of the joint!*”

Needless to say that the above anecdote could not be justly told of the Service warriors of to-day, who represent intellect in its highest development.

Leaving the “Senior,” the “Junior” and the “Rag,” there is yet another warriors’ club, the “Naval and Military,” which, after appearing at one time in the premises now occupied by the “Raleigh,” and then accepting the hospitality for more than a year of the “Junior,” settled in its present abode, Cambridge House, Piccadilly, once the scene of the celebrated *salon* of Lady Palmerston. Rightly or wrongly, this excellent institution has been held responsible for making a dead set at the “old Constitutional Force,” as soldiers who give the greater part of their time to civil life love to call the Militia. The third and fourth battalions of the Service Regiments have always been admitted as part of the Army of the sovereign to the United Service Club and its Junior. For some strange reason—because the Militia, with the eldest sons commanding its companies, has always been from a social point of view unexceptionable—the “Naval and Military” objected to the admission of Militia men. This was the more extraordinary as always in the time of war—from the day of Waterloo until the last hour of the trouble in South Africa—the “Constitutional Force” have shown themselves gallant soldiers, worthy to find themselves shoulder

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to shoulder with "their brothers of the line." In fact, during the latest of our wars, the devoted Militia stayed in the Transvaal, stamping out revolt, long after the Service battalions had returned home to be fêted. It is said that one of the other military and naval *cercles* wished to follow the lead set them in Piccadilly. It was brought before a general meeting.

"I was never so indignant in my life," said a modest-looking gentleman, in a soft voice. "I pride myself upon being the quietest and most retiring member in the Club, but within five minutes of the commencement of the meeting I found myself—I give you my word of honour—standing on a sofa, waving a handkerchief, and shouting myself hoarse!"

Certainly the attack upon the Militia was not allowed to pass unnoticed by those most interested in the welfare of that gallant force.

Among the Social Clubs perhaps the most popular of them all at the commencement of the present century was the delightful *coterie* known to its members—its solitary *habitués*—as "The Steak." I believe I can myself claim to have had something to do with its creation, as the Committee of Selection to elect original members once or twice met in my rooms. Richard Corney Grain—known amongst his intimates as "Dick"—lived in chambers above mine in 4 Pall Mall Place, and to Dick Grain belongs the honour of originating the "Beefsteak." The story goes that the genial

THE BIRTH OF THE BEEFSTEAK CLUB

entertainer—barrister-at-law and wit—was one day standing in the hall of the Garrick Club, when a couple of Guardsmen lounged in and began reading the playbills hanging on the walls.

“Hallo!” cried warrior No. 1. “What on earth is this—‘Ours’?—sounds like a Service piece.”

“Yes,” drawled warrior No. 2. “Wonder what sort of chap could write about the Service—didn’t know any writing chap knew anything about the Service.”

“What’s the name of the chap?” asked No. 1.

“A chap called Tom Robertson,” replied No. 2.

“Who on earth is Tom Robertson?”

“Sure, I don’t know—never heard of him!”

This irritated Dick Grain, for in those days Tom Robertson was *the* dramatist of the period. The Guardsmen—members of the Garrick—might have been pardoned for never having heard of Shakespeare, but not to know Tom Robertson was too impossible. So Dick Grain decided to get together a number of people of his way of thinking, to see if they couldn’t found a club where the name of Tom Robertson should be known, and where even the signature of William Shakespeare should have significance. He very kindly asked me to aid him, and so it came to pass I was in at the birth of the Beefsteak Club.

The idea of the *cercle* was certainly original. It was not to be exclusively Bohemian. The qualifications were to be “somebody” from an

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intellectual point of view, and "clubable." Dukes were not objected to, if they had these necessary qualifications, but they were not to plead "strawberry leaves" as an all-sufficing substitute for every other requisite. As a matter of fact, within a very short time of its foundation, a certain noble Duke, who has since joined the majority, was "pilled," and a subsequently eminent statesman met with the same fate. This gave the "Steak" a vogue which has lasted for more than a quarter of a century. Then there was another excellent rule. Strangers on no account whatever were to be admitted. Thus when you entered the "Steak" you knew that all present were brother members. This exclusiveness made it possible to establish an unwritten law, that everybody should talk without the formality of an introduction to everyone else. And I really believe that such a law is in force to this day. The exclusiveness of a London clubman is proverbial. Unless you know a brother member "at home," as we used to say in our school-days, he does not presume to address you. The other day I went into the "Steak," a club I had not entered for a considerable time, and saw a man I believed I had not met for years. I took him for an *habitué* of the Garrick, and congratulated him upon the great improvements the Committee had effected in the old house.

"Quite a delightful spot!" I observed, "bright, handsome, cheery. What a transformation! Have you been there since it has been re-opened?"

THE CUSTOM OF THE "STEAK"

"Well, no," returned the gentleman I took to be my friend. "I have not been there. In fact, I am not a member."

"Not a member!" I exclaimed. "Why, aren't you So-and-so?"

"No."

"Dear me," I returned, "I am not sure I ought not to beg your pardon. I thought I had met you before."

"No necessity for an apology," returned my unknown brother member. "We may speak to one another at the 'Steak' without an introduction."

From this I take it the excellent rule is in force, and freedom of speech follows freedom of entrance. Certainly, whenever I have had the pleasure of spending an hour or so in Green Street, or at its original site, King William Street, Strand, I have had a delightful time. A supper at the "Steak" always reminds me of the *Punch* dinner, only—I hope I may be understood—more so. In Bouverie Street the great wits of the age—I had the honour of being one of them for about a quarter-of-a century—had other things to consider than smart things *pro bono publico*. At the "Steak," chaff, good stories, and general light-hearted merriment rule supreme. I have the less hesitation in making this assertion as the public are never admitted.

Looking at the march of the first six years of the century, I fancy that there has been a change in the hours of club conviviality. Presently I

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intend to talk of that great revolution in club life, *cercles* for ladies, but here it will be enough to suggest that I think we may owe to the earlier times of our wives, sisters and daughters the disinclination, which is growing stronger and stronger, of "coming home with the matutinal milk." At the end of the last century, the hours were terribly late, or rather, not uncommonly, early. Even nowadays the Garrick and the "Steak" are disinclined to close their doors. No one can be admitted after 3 a.m. or 4 a.m., as the case may be, but then no one is obliged to leave until, like Mrs. Gamp, "they are so disposed." Not so very long ago I had two friends dining with me at the Garrick, who had been asked to meet one another on a little matter of business, in which we three were mutually interested. The banquet was ordered for 7.45. We commenced our meal to the moment, and as the clock struck 8 had disposed of our "affair." Then we cast anxiety to the winds, and thoroughly enjoyed the good things a thoughtful and painstaking *chef* had provided for us. We were dining at the Strangers' Room, which at 9 p.m. was used as a general supper room. About 10 p.m. men dropped in for the pleasing grilled bones and the toothsome Welsh rare-bit. My friends and I fraternised with the new-comers. Then at 11 or 11.30 the actors arrived. We had the latest Green Room gossip, and all that was bright and sparkling from everywhere within reason.

A LATE NIGHT AT THE GARRICK

After midnight the leader-writers and dramatic critics put in an appearance. There had been a new play, and everyone who had been present at the *premier* had something to say about it. There was a slight lull in the conversation, when the actor-manager, who had taken a leading part in the performance, joined our merry company. There was just a slight hesitation, so to speak, to "come out into the open." This was specially noticeable amongst those dramatic critics who felt that, at that very moment, the machines were at work turning out thousands and thousands of papers containing their *critiques*. The actor-manager was charmingly unconscious of any possible difference of opinion. He had done his best in the cause of Art (spelt with a capital initial), and all further anxiety was at an end. The booking in advance at the box office was purely a matter of unimportant detail save as it affected the education of the public. At length, at 3 a.m., two leader-writers for important dailies looked in on their way from Fleet Street and its neighbourhood, and commenced a theological discussion. My friends and I did not quit the Garrick until 6 in the morning.

In the days of my youth I belonged to a club, still, I think, in existence, which was noted for its delight to turn night into day, or rather wait until the transformation had been accomplished. The club consisted of a large number of Service men, bachelor members of the Bar, and

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youthful journalists. It had some excellent premises at the Waterloo Place end of Regent Street. By some mistake or other—no one could explain the mystery—a clergyman was elected a member. There was not the slightest objection to “the black robe,” as there was a tendency to discuss theology about sunrise, when the assistance of a professional expert would have been considered by some of the more excited of the controversialists as of distinct value. For instance, frequently a competent umpire to decide a bet as to the accuracy or inaccuracy of a Biblical quotation would have been worth untold gold. Well, our clerical member appeared one morning, eager for breakfast, at about twenty minutes to nine, and approaching the half-slumbering head waiter in the rather dissipated-looking coffee-room, asked him, “what he could have to eat?”

“What can you have to eat, sir?” repeated the roused head waiter, coming briskly to attention; “very sorry, sir, but the Committee won’t let us serve supper after half-past eight o’clock, but I think I can get you some oysters!”

I imagine that nowadays, with most of the ladies’ clubs closing at midnight or thereabouts, and ultra-late sitting at the House of Commons being the exception proving the rule of reasonable hours, “sunrise sighting” has ceased to be popular. So the early worm has only to dread the early bird and not the boot of the late reveller.

But the passing of the last few years has

CLUBS OF THE BOGUS TYPE

certainly seen one improvement. In the eighteen hundreds, bogus clubs were the rule; now they are the exception. It was quite a common occurrence for a club to be started by a want-of-capitalist, with the result that the members, after a few months' enjoyment of a resting-place amongst hired furniture, in a tentatively acquired tenement, found themselves at the end of that period turned out into the cold, minus a small entrance fee and a far larger first year's subscription.

One of the most notorious of bogus clubs was a *cercle* that was started as the representative of the senior branch of the legal profession. It had a title which suggested an intimate connection with two of the principal Inns of Court. The patrons consisted of the highest officials of the profession, commencing with the Lord Chancellor, and ending at the junior "Silk." All these legal gentlemen were not only patrons but honorary members. I do not know that they made much use of their club because, although it was in the neighbourhood of their chambers, it was a long way off from Westminster Hall, then the site of the Law Courts. I think I may safely say, after these long years, when the statute of limitations takes the wind out of the law of libel, that scarcely a solitary member of the Bar exercised his privileges of honorary membership. Soon stories got about town anent this marvellous caravanserai. Here is a sample:

Two gentlemen, Mr. A. and Mr. B. entered the

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smoking-room one afternoon, and Mr. A. hospitably ordered a couple of "brandies and sodas," then the "wine of the country." It was before the reign of King Whiskey. The liquids were brought, paid for and consumed. Then a second supply was ordered with similar ceremonies, a third, and at last a fourth.

"Bring two more brandies and sodas," said Mr. A., addressing the waiter, who bowed and retired.

"My good fellow," remonstrated Mr. B., bringing out the sentence as if it were composed of a solitary word. "My good fellow, I say, it's a noble thing to be so hospitable. A very noble thing, indeed, my dear fellow, a very noble thing. But I say, old fellow, aren't you rather overdoing it? I say, old fellow, I don't like you paying for all the drinks. Not at all right, old fellow. I know you mean very well, in fact awfully well, old fellow. But it isn't right. You shouldn't pay for all the drinks, old fellow. I ought to pay, old fellow. I ought, indeed."

"Well, why don't you?"

Mr. B. looked at Mr. A. with some surprise. Then he exclaimed, "I can't, my dear fellow. How can I pay, old fellow? I am not a member."

"No more am I!"

It has been said that a monthly magazine on its last legs, with a determined "managing editor" resorts to all sorts of strange expedients to prolong its not too cheerful existence. I think the same

QUITE THE LATEST CLUB IN TOWN

statement can be applied to a proprietary club, started by a self-supporting promoter, in a condition of collapse. Years ago there existed in a very well known locality, a club with the reputation of being "quite the latest in town." Its great attraction was the certainty of finding cards going "from any hour after midnight until noon the next morning." If a clubman found it necessary to quit the "Steak," the Garrick, or any other club, where early retirement was not encouraged, there was always a hearty welcome waiting him at, say, the "Brandenburgh Crescent." From this it may be taken that the majority of the *habitués* were scarcely Bishops, or even Archdeacons. And yet the Committee, or some other governing body connected with the management, suddenly made all the principal persons in the Clergy List, members. The country rectors and vicars—the qualification required was to have a "living" equal to £200 a year—were informed that they "had been unanimously elected to the honour of membership without an entrance fee." It is said that several very worthy ecclesiastics were deeply moved by the compliment and added the distinction of the address to their visiting cards. Whether they subsequently took part in the recreation (just outside action under the gambling acts), for which the place was noted, is a matter of uncertainty.

Lastly, there was a *cercle* with a highly martial title, which flourished for a while, and actually built for itself a house with two medallions of

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Nelson and Wellington guarding the portals. The entrance bore some resemblance to the outside hall of a noted restaurant in Piccadilly. For this reason, and possibly others, it received the nickname of "the Junior Criterion." In spite of this advantage it disappeared with its promoter in the course of the ages.

At the commencement of the twentieth century the principal houses of clubland were holding their own. Political clubs were full, and there was no lack of candidates for the old established and rather costly institutions of Pall Mall, St. James's Street and their immediate vicinity. Suddenly there appeared in clubland a movement that shortly afterwards found its echo in newspaperland. "Half price had commenced," to quote the old announcement that used to appear outside the doors of the theatres in "the early sixties." The usual entrance fee to a first-class West-End Club, as all the world knows, is from thirty to fifty guineas. The regulation subscription is from eight to ten guineas. Suddenly, without any warning, huge buildings were erected to house clubmen invited to become members at a half to a third of the customary subscription and without an entrance fee. For a while the "seniors" sneered at the "juniors," calling the new ventures "pot-houses," "new brooms," and other uncomplimentary titles. But the large, cheap, and not too exclusive had come to stay. During the six years that have passed since the birth of the

THE REVOLUTION IN CLUBLAND

century, many of the best known clubs in town have had a terribly rough time of it. If there were a Royal Commission formed to extract the truth from West-End Club secretaries, many a tale of woe would be unfolded. I believe that, as they say after a crisis on the Stock Exchange, "the worst is over." There has been a survival of the fittest in clubland. Great sacrifices of dignity—from an old member's point of view—have taken place in various directions.

The "Service" at one time was in a chronic condition—according to some deeply respected authorities—of "going to the dogs." The old-fashioned clubs, with their old-fashioned exclusiveness and old-fashioned high prices, were travelling by the same route. But I am glad to think—as I have been a clubman since the mature age of seventeen, when I joined the Civil Service Club on my employment in the War Office—that things are now quiet, and that there is a fair prospect of the most shaky of *cercles* returning to pristine security. The success of the "juniors" no doubt had received assistance by the system of indiscriminate pilling that prevailed during the last decade of the immediately past century. "Why don't you join the Committee?" a member of a well-known literary club asked a brother member. "Well, my dear fellow," responded the one accosted, "what would be the good? I am at peace with the world; I don't want to pill anybody."

And now I come to the movement in clubland

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that is the speciality *par excellence* of the twentieth century. I refer, of course, to the firm establishment of ladies' clubs. If one were a modification of Rip Van Winkle, and after a sleep of (say) twenty years began again to take notice, the change would be absolutely startling. Twenty years ago there was but one ladies' club in London. It is still highly prosperous, and appears in the "Who's Who Year Book" as a club intended for "ladies of position." According to the same valuable work of reference, there are now no less than twenty ladies' clubs *pur et simple*, and three clubs to which ladies are admitted. In my opinion, the arrival of the ladies in clubland is one of the most important social events of the twentieth century.

In 1897 was started a most admirable institution under female patronage, to which gentlemen were admitted as guests. On one occasion I was invited to partake of the hospitality of this admirable venture, and very nearly frightened out of my life. I had heard that it was distinctly "brainy." I had been told that one youthful lady member in her teens was so "advanced" that her sister members declined to listen to her. The Committee of this remarkable *coterie* did me the honour to ask me to open a discussion. I was proud of the distinction, and, as the subject was left to me, suggested that, as a journalist, I might perhaps venture to say something about journalism as a profession for ladies. I was courteously informed

OPENING A DISCUSSION

that the subject would be quite nice, but I must be a little more aggressive. Would I please say whether or no I thought journalism a suitable career for women. I noted that the club preferred the title of the Prayer Book for females to the choice of the Court Guide, so, taking this hint, I declared that I did consider journalism was a proper profession for women—women, quite short, not finicking, simpering ladies, but intellectual, strong-minded women. This insistence upon the scientific description of one of the sexes rather disconcerted me. I am old-fashioned enough to like to call ladies—in fact what they are—ladies.

The next incident that made me tremble was a polite letter from one of the members, asking me to give a *précis* of what I intended to say, as she had been asked to contradict me. This note placed me in a very unhappy position. I have the old-fashioned failing of never liking to contradict a lady, and here I was being asked to give assistance to a lady, to help her to undertake what I should have imagined would have been the ungrateful task of contradicting a gentleman. However, I remembered that, if Eve was a woman, Adam was a man, and that the only other person in the Garden of Eden moving, so to speak, in Society was the serpent, who acted as a sort of master of the ceremonies. Adam wouldn't have minded contradicting Eve ; why should I ? Was I not a man ? I found later on that I was not only a man, but a mere man. A mere man, I

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fancy, is regarded by some of our titular sisters as a very imperfect personage. A mere man, so to speak, is not half a fellow.

The memorable—the ever memorable—evening arrived, when I was to have the honour of opening a discussion in the “brainiest” place in the whole civilised world. The Committee, with a kindness which revealed in spite of themselves the gentleness of their sex, asked me to dinner before the commencement of the discussion. But I was absolutely too nervous to venture to accept the courteous invitation. I refused with the greater regret, as I had learned that, the Club being run on strictly temperance principles, I was sure to have been regaled on ginger beer or some equally stimulating without intoxicating beverage. I felt I deserved a Victoria Cross for having deprived myself of the possibility of quaffing sparkling, exhilarating, mirth-promoting ginger beer, or some other liquid of a kindred character. Sacrifice number one. And now I can only give a general idea of what happened. I cannot possibly write by the card, as my memory may be at fault. Long afterwards I was haunted with the idea that I was not up to the mark, had not said the right things at the right time, and generally had put my foot into it. However, as I have frequently been a guest since the memorable—the ever memorable—evening, I can only hope and believe that all my many imperfections may have been forgiven or—better luck still—possibly forgotten.

IN THE ARENA

I found the large room retained for discussions crowded. I was most courteously conducted to a raised platform on which was seated a most kind-looking lady. As I sat in trepidation beside this kind-looking lady, I glanced at my audience. They were one and all simply charming, but there was an expression on the faces of some of them that filled me with apprehension. I could not help feeling as I imagine a disconcerted gladiator might have felt in the time of Nero, when he raised an appealing hand to the Vestal Virgins. From the expression on the faces of some of the ladies present, I cannot help thinking that, had they been Vestal Virgins in the time of Nero on the occasion I have suggested, they, acting strictly from a sense of duty, would have signified by the movement of their thumbs the advisability of my conquering antagonist continuing his inconvenient because death-dealing occupation.

So it was a relief to turn my eyes from the faces of my judges, or—if there be such a word—judgesses, to their garments. Here I was reassured when I remembered the saying that imitation was the sincerest form of flattery. I noticed with great satisfaction that several ladies were wearing white waistcoats fashioned on the lines of my own, shirts and shirt collars that might have been supplied from my hosier, and other details of toilette more suggestive of the work of the tailor than the *modiste*. I was greatly pleased with the subtle compliment that they had here shown me,

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and I take this, the earliest, opportunity of making my acknowledgment. And as some slight return, may I be permitted to suggest that it is possible that a man's clothes may sometimes look better on a man than on anyone else. I was reassured by the real kindness of the lady seated in the principal chair on the platform. She told me that she was a doctor, and I subsequently learned that she was greatly respected by the male members of the profession she had adopted as her vocation. I also noticed—not without satisfaction—that her robe was absolutely conventional. She was wearing the ordinary evening dress of a lady of good social position. I mentioned, what was really the case, that I was slightly nervous. She encouraged me to be at my ease by telling me that I had a very indulgent audience, who would be sure to be satisfied with whatever I might be pleased to say. Then she introduced me in a few well-turned sentences, and left me to my own resources.

My first idea was to be conciliatory. I felt that I was face to face—some of the faces very pretty ones, others not quite so well favoured—I repeat, face to face with the sex. I had to deal with womankind in the concrete. Here and there I noticed members of my own sex, but they seemed to be absorbed in the overwhelming majority of their sisters perchance, or their cousins or their aunts. “Their sisters, their cousins or their aunts,” words made immortal by the charming music of my friend, the late Sir Arthur Sullivan.

QUITE IN EARNEST

I told my audience how deeply I sympathised with women seeking for a livelihood. I said that I believed that there was really a road to a competency in the paths of journalism. I suggested that such a career, I thought, was pleasanter to a gentlewoman than what in the past used to be the alternatives, the occupation of a nursery governess with disagreeable little scholars, or what was sometimes less pleasing, the chronically snubbed companion of a vulgar and low-born millionairess. I said much more to the same effect and really was in earnest. I forgot the little affectations of the coatee and imitation man's shirt collar, the suggestion of opposition on the score of my sex, and all the rest of the pin pricks to my masculine vanity. I really remembered that I had had a mother, sisters and a wife, and I spoke with all the earnestness that such recollections conjured up.

I don't think I was too long in my address, as I heard no coughing, and when I resumed my seat I was really quite pleased with myself. I felt that I had deserved well of my country. There was slight applause that told me that, at any rate, I had not given mortal offence to everybody up to date.

After a few moments' pause, a more or less young lady was addressing me. I felt at once that she was a spinster. To my surprise she took what I had said in anything rather than a conciliatory spirit. My well-intentioned efforts to praise

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womankind were stigmatised as "patronising." I was given to understand that none of my patronage was needed. But that was not the greatest of my offences. My real crime was one (to my extreme regret) over which I had no control. It appeared that the crime I had committed was being born a boy. Had I only been born a girl, it would have been forgiven me. So far as I could understand, the more or less fair lady's complaint against me was the fact that I was a man. That fact lost me every chance of peace in this world and rest in the next. The speaker was anxious to hear my defence, if I had any. What on earth had made me remain a man—a mere man? How could I have been guilty of so grave a *gaucherie*?

Invited to afford an explanation, and hearing that there was no limit placed upon the number of speeches made by the opener, I attempted something in the shape of a defence. I knew I would have the professional sympathy of the learned lady in the principal chair. She at least knew from her medical training that it was no fault of mine that I had come into the world a boy instead of a girl. So I tried to disarm further hostile criticism by asserting that, if I had been given the choice, I would certainly have preferred to be a woman instead of a man. I said, however, being born a boy had given me certain advantages I would not have foregone on any account. I particularly emphasised the privilege I had enjoyed of "lispering my prayers at my mother's knee." This, I could

THE EQUALITY OF THE SEXES

see, created a very pleasant impression in my favour amongst the feminine portion of the audience. I could not help feeling that there was a smile of sarcastic derision on the faces of the males.

Encouraged by my success, I declared that I was and had ever been in favour of the equality of the sexes. This evoked a burst of genuine general applause. Hearing this, I enlarged upon the subject. I pointed out that equality was—more or less—the law of nature. Now for many years, many centuries, poor unfortunate man had been the slave of woman. If there was only one chair, the woman would have it, one crust of bread, the woman would have seven-eighths of it. If a ship were sinking, the small boat attached to the larger vessel was put at the service of the women to the exclusion of the luckless men. “Was this right?” I asked. “Was it just?” I prided myself upon my British manhood. As a Briton I loved liberty, and suggested that the reason why Britannia found no difficulty in ruling the waves was because she was aware of the fact, more or less confidentially conveyed to her, that Britons never would be slaves. As a representative of the manhood of all that was British, I objected to be a slave. The fact that I was a slave would irritate Britannia to such an extent that she might discontinue to rule the waves. Britannia might ask me if I had not heard of the worm who, under the influence of extreme provocation, had decided to turn? And

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if Britannia did ask this, what could I reply of a satisfactory character? Under all these circumstances, I demanded an appeal to the ballot. Let the position of man be levelled up to the position of woman; let us have, in fact, the equality of the sexes.

There was a pause, and then someone said that my arguments were not worthy of a moment's consideration, as my views were so frivolous.

Then for some little while I was politely ignored while other persons took up the speaking. I listened, smiling blandly, and waited for an opportunity of "cutting in" when a suitable occasion offered. At last a lady was declaring that the chief reason for the physical superiority of man over woman was the absurd custom of girls, during the luncheon interval in the course of an examination, eating a bun. The male student preferred a mutton chop, and consequently males, representing mutton chops, were physically stronger than women, representing buns.

Here I saw my opportunity and interposed on behalf of womanhood and buns. At first there was an inclination to ignore me. I had mortally offended some of those present by my suggestions about the equality of the sexes being incomplete unless man was permitted to have the same privileges as woman. This specimen of my "frivolity" had rendered me unworthy of attention. But fortunately, I had had some experience in public speaking, and knew that, if you kept on your

A VINDICATION OF BUNS

feet long enough, you would sooner or later be granted a hearing. So I stood to my guns, and the kind and scientific lady in the principal chair courteously assisted me in my efforts to obtain what I termed "fair play." At length I was airing my eloquence once again. I pointed out that I thought a grave injustice was being done to the bun. I declared that, without claiming to be a scientific expert, I had reason to believe that buns in their way were as supporting as mutton chops. And I was led to this conclusion by the special training I had received before I became a member of the Bar. Speaking in my professional capacity as a barrister-at-law, it was my deliberate opinion that buns were equal to mutton chops.

I brought out the last words with great gravity and created an impression. I think I may say a profound impression. I was not surprised at the result, as I have frequently noticed that the assertion of my professional status has given me—of course amongst laymen—the position of a judge. From this point forward, until the end of the discussion, the ladies present seemed to hang upon my words. I believe that, even if Portia had been amongst the audience, that forensic Venetian lady, from force of example, would have been inclined to agree "with her learned friend."

"You see," I said, "having made this assertion as a member of the Bar, it is my duty—a duty I owe to my professional reputation—to prove my

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case. Therefore I bring forward in support of my contention a fact well known to every member of the Bar who has had the honour of practising in the Central Criminal Court or, as it is sometimes colloquially termed, the Old Bailey. At times my duties have taken me to the Central Criminal Court—otherwise the Old Bailey—and as my practice has had more to do with the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division than the other branches of the legal divisions of justice, I have had ample leisure to turn my attention away from my briefs to other subjects of a somewhat cognate character.”

This short address had the desired effect of obtaining for me a respectful silence. My audience were evidently anxious to hear what I had to say as a member of the Bar. I resumed my lecture—for so had my words become—with greatly increased confidence.

“Now it must be known to all present who read the newspapers—and who does not read the papers nowadays?—that the Central Criminal Court is devoted to the punishment of crime. Sometimes the cases are of a more or less trivial character, never quite trivial, because the prisoners standing in the dock, with few exceptions, have already had a previous trial in a court of first instance, and I think I may add without an exception, remembering as I do the stipendiary police magistrate, the coroner and the chairman of the grand jury. I need scarcely remind those present that, although the civil rights of property

FOR THE DEFENCE

have justly proper recognition, yet the liberty of the subject is of infinitely more importance than the mere question of the ownership of freehold, copyhold and leasehold lands and tenements, and other matters connected with real and personal property."

Here I paused for a moment to give my audience time to recover from this flood of forensic eloquence. I remembered with gratitude the examinations I had had to undergo to qualify for the degree of utter barrister, and I felt that, without the intimate acquaintance I had been forced to acquire with the works of the late erudite Joshua Williams, I should have been, so to speak, nowhere. I resumed with ever-increasing confidence.

"I am sorry to say that on more than one occasion I was obliged to be present at trials when the prisoner in the dock was charged with the most serious crime known to our law—the terrible crime of murder. On those occasions the leading counsel for the Crown was very frequently one of the ablest members of the Bar that ever belonged to our profession. I refer to that admirable counsel, learned in the law, that I am proud to be able to call my greatly revered friend, Sir Harry Brougham Poland."

Another pause to note the effect of my words, and I resumed my address.

"Now in the Central Criminal Court—otherwise the Old Bailey—there is an adjournment for

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luncheon, following a precedent set by the Court of King's Bench and the High Court of Justice, Chancery Division. As my learned friend—I sincerely beg pardon, although perhaps I might describe the lady with equal appropriateness as my fair friend—has suggested, there is also an interval for luncheon, when an examination of a vastly different sort is conducted outside the grim and weather-worn walls of Newgate."

Another pause—I felt that my entire audience were deeply interested.

"At the Central Criminal Court—otherwise the Old Bailey—of course such a man as my revered friend, Sir Harry Brougham Poland, was closely studied. It was a complete legal education to hear him conduct a difficult case from start to finish. There were some of his colleagues who, perhaps less anxious than himself, retired from the Court to partake of a luncheon on the lines of City hospitality provided by the municipal authorities. On some of these occasions Sir Harry Brougham Poland remained in his place consulting with his friends, and giving every moment of his time to the consideration—grave consideration—of the proofs attached to his brief. I can say, giving his entire time, although he was not unaware of the necessity of sufficient nourishment, and admitting this necessity, my revered friend partook of luncheon. And of what did that luncheon consist? Why, ladies and gentlemen, of buns."

THE TRIUMPH OF BUNS

And with this telling point I resumed my seat. The kind lady in the principal chair, who had listened to my words with the most flattering attention, followed me. She explained that what I had said was of real importance. She thought that too much stress had been laid upon the necessity of animal food. There were several substances—such as chocolate and the like—which were admirable supporters in the time of severe physical and mental strain. Then, turning to buns, she might observe that the component parts were so and so and so and so and so.

The ball, once set a-rolling, moved on steadily. Everyone was anxious to add to the general knowledge concerning buns. In fact, the evening ended in the most delightful manner imaginable. We gave scanty attention to the many deficiencies of mere man, even the importance of journalism as a suitable profession for women was scarcely remembered, and we talked of nothing else but buns. I was honoured with a most kind and cordial vote of thanks, which I acknowledged with heartfelt gratitude, and then we all retired to the refreshment room to be regaled upon excellent tea and equally excellent buns.

Well, perhaps I may be permitted to explain, as it is my hope that many of my audience of that memorable, that ever memorable evening, may be amongst my readers, that I have the strongest desire to treat women—in my character as a mere man—with the utmost respect. It would grieve

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me beyond measure if any of the ladies then present imagined for a moment that I desired to turn any detail of that memorable, that ever memorable evening into ridicule. I was much struck with the real earnestness, the real kindness that marked the conduct of all present. I felt that, in spite of the nonsense about the shortcomings of "mere man," the always old Adam was still an object of affectionate interest to the ever new Eve. Later on I was again present at a debate when the question of "old fashions" and "new fashions" were contrasted, much to the benefit of the former. Invited to speak, I declined to admit the equality of the sexes. I insisted that the chivalry that man owes to woman is not because he is afraid of her, but because she has taught him to respect her. I would not admit that she was our equal, but our superior. Remembering all the good women that in the last four or five thousand years have made man such a much better fellow than he would have been without them, it would be base ingratitude to detract from the praises that are their due. I said all this with the additional satisfaction of meaning every word I uttered, and having said this about ladies in general and the club of the most advanced of their sex in particular, let me deal with the great movement that has been one of the principal features of this century. I refer to the establishment of *cercles* conducted by the gentler sex, possibly helped in some cases by representatives of the sterner material. During the

LADIES' CLUBLAND

reign of Queen Victoria the idea of a ladies' club composed and governed entirely by ladies, would have been considered too absurd for words. As the mother-in-law was the standing joke of the Mid-Victorian dramatist, so was the latch-key used on the return from the club the standing scandal. Mark Lemon, the first, longest, and—I think I may say without giving offence to my friends, the late Shirley Brooks, Tom Taylor and the fourth Editor—the greatest Editor of *Punch*, wrote a farce called the “Ladies' Club” in which the quite too absurd movement was turned into ridicule. It was shown to admiration that no club could exist without the assistance of man. The growth and success of *cercles des dames* have come as a revelation to the male *habitué* of clubland. Everyone for the last five years has been asking everyone, “How is it done?”

It certainly is a mystery to me. I have been on the strength of many a club committee and I know the extraordinary difficulty of entertaining ladies. After years of anxious thought at one of the Service Clubs, the governing body decided to give their female folk luncheon during the London season. It was tried for one year and then abandoned on account of the tremendous difficulty of keeping the thing going to anybody's satisfaction. There were a heap of details that we committee-men as “mere men” were unable to understand, much less conquer. In a word, the table d'hôte came to grief, or if this was too strong

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a definition of its fate, let it stay at the undoubted fact that the experiment was never repeated.

Suddenly, with scarcely a note of warning, ladies' clubs spring up in all directions. As I have suggested, in the last twenty years they have increased twenty-fold. And what do they do? Why the first thing their committees arrange is to offer unlimited hospitality to men. And when we men dine with our wives or our cousins, as their guests, what do we find? Why, the most admirable arrangements from the moment of our hanging up our hats in our own apartments until we light our cigarettes by the hall-porter's match prior to leaving the place for home, sweet home. It is simply a very beautiful sight to see husband and wife dining *tête-à-tête* at either the Ladies', Army and Navy or the Lyceum, both clubs already teeming with pleasing recollections. One can always tell such a couple by the anxiety of "he" to order the wine for himself and "she." In some of the clubs waitresses throng the coffee-rooms, in others there are the regulation flunkies in the customary plush knee-breeches. But whether it be Hebe or Ganymede, the selection of wines is nearly always left to the husband.

"What shall we have to drink?" asks the wife.
"Shall it be champagne?"

"Yes, champagne cyder!"

When there is a large party, of which the husband counts only as one, then the head waiter has a fine time of it—under the sole superintendence

ALLOWING THE LADIES TO SMOKE

of the wife—with the wine cellar. To the horror of the husband of the donor of the feast, he sees magnums arrive with the sweets. But such mistakes nowadays seldom occur. The lady clubite is growing accustomed to the mysteries of the *ménu*.

The other day I was presiding at a public dinner and the loyal toasts had been duly honoured with the customary enthusiasm. I saw cigar and cigarette cases being held up as tokens of distress in all directions.

“Gentlemen,” I said, “I have to ask your permission to allow the ladies to smoke!”

It may have been a slip of the tongue or not. I had been that afternoon in the smoking-room of one of the best of our ladies' clubs and had no doubt come away deeply impressed with the grandeur of what I had seen about me. Not that I had seen much in the smoking-room, for the fumes of nicotine had made the apartment resemble an old-fashioned November fog. If a mere man may presume to offer a word of advice, the smoking-rooms of the ladies' clubs are the least satisfactory apartments in the establishments. No doubt with a view to giving a genteel, feminine view to the ladies' smoking-room, men visitors are tacitly expected to smoke cigarettes, and cigarettes only. The result is that the perfume of stale tobacco clings to all the curtains and the furniture generally. It would be wiser if cigars were permitted. In the old-fashioned men's clubs, by an unwritten

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law, pipes are not admitted. The result is that the smoking-rooms of the male sex are always fresh and airy, while the ladies' cigarette chambers are stuffy and never wholesome. And let it not be thought that I speak as an expert. It is only what I have noticed when I have been hospitably entertained by one or more of my charming hostesses. For all that and all that, ladies' clubs are excellent institutions, and I am glad to be able to think that, once in London, they have come to stay. May they live long and prosper!

A final word anent clubland in general and English clubland in particular. Looking abroad, it is the English club that leads the van. Every place on the Continent where English do congregate—and where do they not?—there is the *Cercle Anglais* with its flagstaff ready to fly the Royal Standard on the King's birthday and other occasions of patriotic rejoicing. There may be a military *cercle* for the natives, but the English club is the one and only institution worthy of a week's subscription. As regards clubland in England, the institutions can be counted by scores, nay hundreds. A short while ago it was my pleasant duty to edit a club page for a popular periodical. To my surprise, I found there were hundreds of clubs in London and the provinces of which, until then, I had been in ignorance. The *Spécialité de la maison* of these institutions were "nights" devoted to special purposes. There were "domino nights," "concert nights," "theatrical nights,"

THE BEST CLUB IN THE WORLD

and, most popular of all, "ball nights." Ladies and gentlemen were equally welcome, and apparently the equality of the sexes was the rule of the assemblies.

Then the number of shooting clubs, yachting clubs, cycling clubs, cricket clubs, fishing clubs, bridge clubs, chess clubs, can be counted by the hundred, nay the thousand. And last of all there are golf clubs to which mere man may belong from the age of nine up to the age of ninety. And the object of all these institutions, in the first instance, is good fellowship. And before now the time has arrived when they could be used for more warlike purposes. When the late Queen had had her life threatened by some mad young ruffian in the precincts of Buckingham Palace, a body-guard of the descendants of the Cavaliers, members of the West-End clubs, assembled to greet her and to defend her if further defence were needed. By judicious precautions, the bogus sporting and inferior clubs have been stamped out. In clubs, as in other institutions, there has been a survival of the fittest.

Perhaps the most encouraging sign of the times is the improvement, the marked improvement, in one of our institutions that at one period of our history threatened to fall into disrepute. Once again it is the boast of its members that the most respectable place in the world, with the best kitchen, the best cellar, and on special occasions the best conversation, is the House of Commons.

CHAPTER VI

AMATEUR SOLDIERING

Fascination of the Service—Commanding Volunteer Horse Artillery—Insubordination—Gunner Alfred Tennyson—Interview with the Second Duke of Wellington—The Tower Hamlets Militia—Guards *versus* Rifle Brigade—The Earliest Autumn Manœuvres—Stories of the Militia—Marching Down the Guards—An Appreciation of the Auxiliary Forces—Doting on the Military.

WHEN I was requested by the Editor of that most excellent book of autobiography, "Who's Who," to answer the question, "What is your favourite recreation?" I wrote, "Amateur Soldiering." From a very early date in my more or less adventurous career I had taken an interest in the Army. I remember early in my teens allowing the money that had been supplied by my indulgent mother to furnish me with a winter overcoat to be expended by my elder brothers in tin soldiers. At the school to which Albert and I were sent in Scarsdale Terrace, Kensington, we learned the facings of most of the regiments of the British Army. Our master had the very appropriate name of Birch, and he it was who gave us youngsters our taste for the King's Service. He practically caused my elder brother to join the Indian Navy, and led me to love the work of the Militia and Volunteers. The moment I had an opportunity of girding on a sword I donned the necessary uniform. The chance came when I ran

GUNNER ALFRED TENNYSON

across a gentleman who, as a publisher, was engaged in producing the works of the late Poet Laureate. When I wish to remind myself of the greatest things I have accomplished, I call to mind the fact that for some years I was actually Captain Commandant in command of Gunner Alfred Tennyson.

The Fourth Middlesex Artillery Volunteers (Authors) Corps, when I had the honour of meeting them, were two batteries strong, with permission to form a third battery. The C.O. was the gentleman to whom I have already referred, and his Second in Command was Captain Hamilton Hume, who subsequently became one of my fastest friends. Hume had served in the Crimea and was one of the kindest fellows. It was he who joined me in the venture of *Black and White*, when he edited half the paper for the Conservatives, and I took control of the other moiety on behalf of the Liberals. I joined as a subaltern, but before I had been many months in the corps found myself gazetted Captain of a Battery. At this distance of time I have a very vague recollection of what happened, but know that I somehow again within a very short period was promoted to be Captain Commandant. I believe that—outside Royalty—the late Colonel Yorke was the youngest soldier of his rank, his promotion being well under thirty, and I fancy that I must have been quite the most juvenile of Captains Commandant. I was scarcely out of my teens, but full of military ardour. I found the

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corps in rather a disorganised condition. My predecessor had grand ideas and had got the authorities in Pall Mall to consent to the 4th Middlesex V.C. being a Horse Artillery Corps ! I remember seeing him in one of the most gorgeous uniforms imaginable—a mass of silver braid, plume and spurs. Until much later I did not get my *grande tenue*, being satisfied with an undress uniform which, with its sabretache, was sufficiently striking. I believe that my late C.O. had had some quarrel with the W.O., which had led to his seeking retirement. Knowing that a brigade of Horse Volunteer Artillery could not be carried on for nothing, Hamilton Hume had very wisely followed his leader's example, so I had the proud position of appearing in the Army List at the head of two or three brother officers as Captain Commandant. Unfortunately the late C.O. was anxious to resume his position at the head of affairs, and there were dark rumours that his influence was at work to make my position, well, to say the least of it, not exactly a bed of roses. We were rather in difficulties, for the W.O., anxious for a change, had accepted my predecessor's resignation before obtaining a number of carbines that had been in his possession as Commanding Officer.

On my first appearance on parade as Captain Commandant I found the corps on the verge of mutiny. Instead of responding to my polite request to "fall in" they commenced to hold an indignation meeting at which they passed a vote

QUELLING A MUTINY

of confidence in their late Commanding Officer. I was a very young man, but, fortunately, had beside me two old soldiers, who told me that they would stand by me through thick and thin. The first was a Major of Artillery (retired) who had been waiting until the corps reached the strength of three batteries to get the *pucka* appointment of Adjutant. He was then only "acting adjutant." My other supporter was a "regular" Sergeant-major.

"If you would take my advice, Captain à Beckett," said the Major, "I would again give the order to fall in and get the Sergeant-major to second your efforts to obtain a proper drill."

I acted upon the suggestion, with the fairly gratifying result that five gunners and a bombardier formed themselves into a rather skeleton company. The Sergeant-major put the bombardier in command and came back to me (with a salute) to ask for further orders.

"I should now approach the indignation meeting," counselled the Major, "and warn that Lieutenant over there that you consider his conduct insubordinate and order him sternly to take post."

I obeyed the instruction and regret to say that the Lieutenant only laughed, and so did the indignation meeting.

"Now, Captain à Beckett," continued the Major, "I think I should arrest those two ringleaders in uniform and deprive them of their arms and

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accoutrements. That you can leave, I fancy, with confidence to the Sergeant-major."

"Quite so, sir," responded the worthy non-com. with a military salute.

"Well, Sergeant-major, do your best."

My willing retainer marched up to the ringleaders and asked them for their carbines and accoutrements. Apparently considering the request an act of courtesy, the gunners immediately gave up their belts and firearms. But when they were told that they were under arrest they expressed themselves much annoyed and requested an interview with me.

"Will you consent to see them, sir?" asked the Sergeant-major with another military salute.

"Certainly," I replied, feeling deeply interested in the proceedings.

"If you please, sir," said the milder of the ringleaders, "we have no personal objection to you, but we want our old Captain back again."

"Insolence!" murmured the Major. "Tell him you are going to dismiss him from the corps."

"Insolence!" I echoed. "I am going to dismiss you from the corps."

"What! dismiss him?" cried ringleader No. 2.

"Tell him that you will dismiss him too," prompted my friend the Major. "And I will dismiss you too," was my echo.

The two men seemed astounded. They consulted, and then the bolder again addressed me.

INTERVIEW WITH DUKE OF WELLINGTON

“ Beg your pardon, sir, but you are a young man and very likely don't know the ins and outs of Volunteering. But you should know, sir, that if you dismiss us you will lose three quid. The Government pays thirty bob a head for capitation grant.”

Acting upon the advice of my friend, the Major, I dismissed the parade. There was a little consultation as to what should be done with the two carbines and accoutrements, and ultimately the Sergeant-major—a most obliging man—promised to look after them.

I wrote to the War Office reporting what had occurred and repeated my request in writing that my subordinate should be requested to send in his papers. Then I got two letters, one from the War Office and the other from the Lord Lieutenant of the County, the Duke of Wellington, son of the hero of Waterloo. I thought I would go to His Grace first, before visiting my old quarters in Pall Mall. I presented myself at Apsley House, and was ushered in to see the old nobleman who had signed my commission, for in those days the Volunteer officers were appointed by the County Lord Lieutenants. I found His Grace an exceedingly kind and courteous gentleman.

“ I am sorry you have had so much trouble with your corps, Captain à Beckett, but the fact is we are all rather in a difficulty. I have asked you to be kind enough to call upon me to see if you can help us out of it.”

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"I can only suggest, your Grace, that you dismiss my insubordinate Lieutenant and generally support my actions if you approve of them."

"Oh, certainly, Captain à Beckett, we quite approve of your actions. You seem to have acted with great discretion. Yet we are certainly in rather a difficulty."

"You were kind enough to say that I could help you out of it. Perhaps your Grace would indicate in what direction my efforts should be used."

"Well, Captain à Beckett, I must confess that I consider the 4th Middlesex Artillery Volunteers scarcely the best in the service. I really think your undoubted merits for command could be used more usefully—I repeat more usefully—in some other arm of Her Majesty's Forces. I should like you to be posted to some other and more distinguished regiment, say as a Major."

The Duke smiled and played with his pencil case.

I smiled too, the idea of a majority at twenty, something or nothing, appealed to me.

"I really think, your Grace, you can scarcely call the 4th Middlesex Artillery Volunteers undistinguished, considering that the Poet Laureate is one of my gunners."

"Quite so, quite so, my dear sir. But I have a slight acquaintance with the Poet Laureate and would certainly, were you appointed to another corps, do my best—use what small influence I possess—to get him to follow you."

At that I fairly laughed. The idea of getting

DISCIPLINE PREFERRED TO A MAJORITY

the author of "The Idylls of the King" to follow me from one Volunteer regiment to another tickled me. The Duke smiled too.

"You will see from my suggestion that I am most anxious to set matters right."

"But what good would it do if I were to be transferred (as a Major) from one corps to another?"

"Why, my dear sir, it would pave the way to reinstating the late Commanding Officer."

"But surely his resignation was almost compulsory."

"Well, well, I believe there was some slight misunderstanding. After all, there was nothing in the least reflecting upon his character as an officer and a gentleman. He was only rather too impulsive—called a high official in Pall Mall a confounded War Office scribbler or something of that sort—and I have no doubt will yet make a most excellent Commanding Officer. What do you say?"

"That I really can see no reason why I should relinquish the command of my present regiment."

I have been called an obstinate person—some people say pig—all my life, and I was obstinate then. I did not see why I should make room for a gentleman with a temper evidently no better than my own.

"The fact is, Captain à Beckett," continued the Duke in a confidential tone, "your predecessor has rather a pull over us. He has got all the arms of

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the corps in possession, and the law officers of the Crown are of opinion that it will require an Act of Parliament to recover them if he does not assist us. So you see how it is. Well, I have reason to believe—mind, I do nothing further but say that I have reason to believe—that if your predecessor is reinstated he will yield up the carbines of the corps and also some harness, with the greatest pleasure.”

But no, I would not help. The Duke was very sad, but most kind.

“I quite appreciate the position you take up. I must confess that I believe it would have commended itself to my father, who, as you know, was a strict disciplinarian, and this being the case I will do nothing further to influence you.”

I was not a little pleased to be likened to the great Duke of Wellington. I had already—in an action for libel—been called a young Napoleon. Evidently soldiering on heroic principles was my *spécialité*.

So we shook hands and parted; the Duke saying as I left: “You cannot be tempted, I suppose, by a majority in the Working Men’s Corps?”

My next visit was to the War Office to interview or rather to be interviewed by the late Sir James Lindsay, the Inspector-General of Auxiliary Forces.

“Well, we must get those carbines somehow,” said Sir James genially; “you see, you are primarily responsible, not that we would fix you

“ A LITTLE ACT OF PARLIAMENT ”

with the responsibility, because they were never handed over to you. What would you suggest ? ”

I suggested that the drill sergeant and a file of men should be sent for them.

“ I don’t think that will have much effect. Your predecessor has not much respect for authority,” and he smiled at some recollection, possibly at the story of ‘ the confounded War Office scribbler,’ and continued, “ If the drill sergeant and the file of men fail, well then send a policeman ! ”

“ And if the policeman can’t get them, sir ? ”

“ Well, then, I suppose we must run through a little Act of Parliament. Please let me know the result.”

So I went off. The sergeant and file of men failed, and so did the police constable. So the only thing to be done I suppose was the passing of a little Act of Parliament. I hear that the scenes of the efforts to obtain the carbines were most amusing—that the Military and the Civil power were defied from the ground-floor window. My predecessor was very popular in the neighbourhood and had the moral support of a crowd of sympathisers, who jeered the representatives of the Military and Police.

I had rather an uphill job to get my corps into anything like discipline, but we managed to pass an annual inspection with some credit to ourselves, and later on were absorbed into the 3rd Middlesex Artillery Volunteers, one of the smartest regiments

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in the Service, under the command of Lord Truro and his nephew, my old and valued friend, Colonel Amyatt Ray. But before this happy consummation was reached I was put to considerable annoyance. For writing the names of the gentlemen who had defied my authority in the Duke of Wellington's Riding School in Regimental Orders as "dismissed on account of insubordination," I was threatened with an action for libel! Then I was summoned to discover the whereabouts of a certain dummy gun which I had never seen, and of which I had no knowledge whatever. Then I summoned in my turn some of my men, who had not paid their subscriptions. I forget in which of these actions a gentleman appeared who has since become one of my most respected friends. It was the first time I had seen Sir George Lewis, who, forty years ago, was just embarking on the professional career in which he has been so brilliantly successful. He was the nephew of Mr. George Lewis (a friend of my father), who was the head of the firm which then, as now, conducted a most prosperous business in Ely Place. It was the only time I had Sir George against me. He suggested in his cross-examination that I owed my commission to my connection with the War Office. This was too much, and with great dignity I appealed to the Bench. I was there as the Commanding Officer of one of Her Majesty's regiments and in Her Majesty's absence practically her representative. As the representative of Queen

THE ACUMEN OF SIR GEORGE LEWIS

Victoria I could not permit it to be suggested that she had given me my commission improperly. I appealed to the Bench—as another representative of Her Majesty—to protect the Queen, and the Bench came to my assistance.

After so many years have passed it is difficult to remember every detail, but I cannot help feeling that my learned friend Sir George showed his customary acumen in his cross-examination. Of course even now I cannot admit that at the mature age of two or three and twenty I was not the best possible Commanding Officer of insubordinate Volunteer Artillery, but I do say that it is quite conceivable that had I not been in the War Office (where I had left a brother as an official) I might never have held so ideal an appointment.

Since the days of which I write the Volunteers have vastly improved. For some time I held commissions both in the junior arm of the Auxiliary Forces and the Militia. During the visit of the Volunteers to Liège I came across the present King of the Belgians, just forty years ago. I am sorry to say that some of the rank and file were not on their best behaviour. It was scarcely their fault. The hospitality of the Belgians was so lavish that weak heads quickly surrendered to claret and champagne and a compound known as "*Jin Ecossais*," which tasted very much like whiskey.

King Leopold II was present at one of the banquets held in honour of the Volunteers, and many

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of our men wished to shake him by the hand in the most convivial manner. The King showed great tact and *bonhommie* under rather trying circumstances. The officers present—of which I was one—did their best to keep the enthusiasm within decorous bounds.

In 1905 I was again introduced to the King of the Belgians at the International Congress of the Press at Brussels. His Majesty received some three hundred or four hundred journalists in special audience. Again I was much struck with his tact and *bonhommie*. He appeared to know every civilised language under the sun. He was equally at his ease with delegates from France, England, Italy, and Germany. He conversed with them in their own tongues and appeared to be well up in the burning questions of the hour.

The first regiment of Militia in which I had the honour to serve changed its title frequently. It was originally the 1st Royal Tower Hamlets, then the King's Own Light Infantry, and ultimately the 7th Battalion of the Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade. When the territorial scheme linked with the name of Cardwell was introduced I was told off to interview the Powers that Were at the War Office on the subject. We, and our sister regiment, the Queen's Own Light Infantry, were in a unique position. We did not belong to the counties. Our chief duty was to guard the Tower of London, and when that fortress was used by the

FATE OF THE TOWER HAMLETS MILITIA

Sovereign as a Palace to provide a suitable guard of honour. In recognition of these rights I believe we had the privilege of marching through the streets of London with colours flying, bayonets fixed and drums beating. I went to Pall Mall as directed, and boldly claimed that as we were a sort of local body-guard of the Sovereign, we should be considered a Militia reserve of the Household Brigade. The authorities, represented by someone's private secretary, expressed astonishment at my audacity.

"Why, none of your men are much more than five feet five are they?"

"No," I admitted, "but they are as hard as nails and the best of good sorts."

"That may be, but for the reserve of the Guards we want men who can be drafted into the service battalions on an emergency."

"I daresay they would be a little undersized if they were measured by the Brigade standard, but for all that they are a very fine body of men and most useful."

"Well, how would you like to be one of the reserve battalions of the first regiment of the British Army—the Royal Scots?"

"Very nice indeed. The only objection would be we would be sure to be called—as we train in Dalston and Bethnal Green—the Shoreditch Highlanders."

"How about the Rifle Brigade? We have got some Irish regiments that we thought of attaching

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to the Rifle Brigade, and you might be added to the number."

I was pleased at the idea.

"Well, I was told to pray for the Household Brigade, and the Rifle Brigade must be as near as I can get to it. Very well, the Rifle Brigade."

And in due course the King's Own Light Infantry Militia became the 7th Rifle Brigade, and gave up their badly-fitting scarlet tunics to appear in green-black uniforms of their service battalions.

I was in command of a company, and was thoroughly delighted with my men. They were the best of fellows, and good nature personified. Of course, there were the usual number of regimental stories all quite (or nearly quite) devoid of foundation. One was that the civil power were anxious to secure a person whose acquaintance they desired to make and who was supposed to be hiding in the regiment. A detective got permission to search the ranks when the companies were assembled on parade ready to march off. The detective obtained permission to walk down the ranks to see if he could discover the culprit. He went, company by company, until he got to the last rear-rank man. Then he stopped like a pointer before his quarry.

"Surely you don't know that man," cried the Adjutant indignantly. "Why, he is the best man in the battalion."

"No, I don't know him, sir," answered the detective, "but I know all the rest!"

FOR THE SAKE OF A RECRUIT

The son of a friend of mine was so fond of soldiering that he ran away from home and enlisted in a Cavalry regiment. I was sent to interview the commander of his troop. The Major was a very decent fellow, and there was a link between the officer and the recruit's father in the fact that both had been at Eton. It was arranged that the Major and the lad's parent should dine together at one of the latter's clubs to "talk it over." My friend asked me to be present to represent on his behalf the military element. The dinner was an excellent one. My friend was a great epicure, and took infinite trouble that his dinners should be the best in town. The Major commenced operations by turning up a quarter of an hour late and consequently making the cook in a bad temper. I did my best to keep the conversation from flagging by talking of matters military. But the Major would have none of it, and insisted upon giving long stories about bee-rearing, a subject which was of no particular interest to either our host or myself. Then when dinner was over my friend suggested that perhaps the Major would have to catch the last train to Aldershot.

"Not at all," returned the soldier. "I am on pass to-night, and can stay here until any hour. Well, I got hold of a patent hive before the next swarming and found I possessed a treasure."

And he prosed on for twenty minutes. Our host—who had had a hard day of literary work—

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grew drowsier and more drowsy. Then the dining-room began to be used for supper. Several eminent actors dropped in.

"And that's Bancroft, is it?" said the Major in a stage whisper. "And Irving! Dear me!"

My friend yawned, and at length, to our huge delight, the Major got up to go. By this time it was nearly three in the morning.

"Well," said our host heartily; "you know, Major, you have a son of mine in your troop. I shall feel it awfully kind of you if you will keep a friendly eye on him."

"Of course, my dear fellow, of course I would. But unfortunately I shan't have much opportunity. They will keep your boy at the dépôt no end of a long time, and I'm off to India next Tuesday!"

To return to the Militia. There was one story certainly true. It was a tradition of the regiment. I had not been half-a-dozen hours at headquarters before I heard of it. During the Indian Mutiny the regiment was embodied and stationed at Aldershot. Opposite was the recently raised battalion of the 2nd 24th Regiment. It was Christmas time, and a dispute arose between the King's Own and the 2nd 24th as to which Yule Tide entertainment was the better—that supplied by the Regulars or that by the Militia. Belts were produced and used, and then the 2nd 24th rushed to their quarters and fired a volley into our men. There was an inquest, and the blame

PAROCHIAL PATRIOTISM

fell upon the 2nd 24th. The late Duke of Cambridge harangued the Regular battalion. "If I had my way I would send you to——" and he mentioned a place with an exceptionally sultry climate. "But as you can't go there just yet, you shall all go to Mauritius!"

I must confess that, comparing the Militia with the Volunteers, there would be no doubt about the superiority of the former to the latter. The Volunteers have got into shape of late years, but before the South African War they were very much in the rough. The idea used to be that before a corps of citizen soldiers could become of the slightest value it would be necessary to shoot half the battalion *pour encourager les autres*. My grandfather was a Captain in the Queen's Westminster in 1807, and I came across some of his orders in the archives of the regiment only the other day. The work was really hard and ably performed. The compensation in those days was that an efficient Volunteer escaped the Militia ballot. My grandfather, Captain William à Beckett, was apparently as keen upon soldiering as his descendant. I have a portrait of the old gentleman in full uniform. The idea of the Volunteers at the beginning of the nineteenth century was only their particular parish. They were not to interfere with the protection of neighbouring property. So Kensington might be invaded for all Bayswater cared, and Knightsbridge might be destroyed so long as Chelsea was safe.

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The recent idea of Rifle Clubs is only returning to the initial notion of the movement suggested in 1859. My brother Albert joined the War Office Company of the South Middlesex, and retired because they removed from the uniform the silk scarf permitted the officers of the line. My Colonel in the Militia, Sir Alfred Somerset, K.C.B., commanded also a regiment of Volunteers. One day, as he was riding at the head of his battalion, he noticed that No. 10 Company was marching abreast of No. 1.

"Retire your men, sir," he cried, and the Captain of No. 10 fell to the rear with his Company. Later on he found that the same detachment had forged their way to the front. He then rebuked their commander for his "pushfulness."

"It is not my fault, sir," exclaimed the Captain. "The fact is, sir, my men will come up to the front of the column because they say they have as much right to hear the band as Number 1!"

This, I fear, was the spirit of the force generally. The old motto "Defence not defiance" had been replaced by "One man is as good as another and better."

My experience of the Militia was that it was in every sense a valuable force. When I first joined there was a strong *esprit de corps* in every battalion because the men belonged to the soil, and the officers came from the same district as the rank and file. The subalterns did not use the regiment as merely a means of passing into the Line, but looked

THE FATE OF THE MILITIA

upon it as a county institution which had been supported by their fathers and which would receive the help of their sons. I not only served in the dear old Tower Hamlets with its good-hearted, game little costers, but in a county regiment in the North, and in both I found the same *esprit de corps*. It was thirty-five years ago that the old Constitutional Force was weakened by the filling of it with old line officers as Captains and birds of passage in the junior ranks. The old Line officers, accustomed to the smartness of the Regulars, treated their men with neglect and contempt. The subalterns, who hoped to gain their commissions in a year or two, shared with their seniors the same sentiment of indifference. The territorial scheme was a step in the right direction, had it been accepted by the Regulars in the proper spirit. In the days of Wellington the Militia was considered as a part and parcel of the Forces of the Crown. The idea was that elder sons went into the old Constitutional Force while younger brothers found a profession in the Regulars.

As I have said in another page, the United Service Club and the Junior United Service Club—the two senior Service Clubs—made no distinction between Regular and Militia officers. Both were elected. It was left to “the Rag” and the comparatively modern Naval and Military to shut their doors in the faces of the hard-working, well-born Militiamen. When every regiment became possessed of four battalions—two of them

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Regulars and two Militia—everything that could be done was done to keep them apart. The men at first bore a large “ M ” on their shoulder straps, which was changed into a “ 3 ” or “ 4 ” later on, but their officers retain to this day the same lettering. Then instead of the regimental annual dinner numbering all battalions in its gathering the Regulars (with a few exceptions) kept themselves to themselves. Only the other day I came across a lad who had just “ joined the service ” who was telling a good story about how he had accidentally cheeked a General through the telephone. He had sent some ridiculous message through the wires which caused an explosion.

“ Blankety, blankety, blank ! ” shouted the voice at the other end, “ do you know who I am, sir ? ”

“ No, sir, I don’t.”

“ I am the General in Command, sir ! ”

“ Oh, I beg your pardon, sir,” replied the meek voice of the recently joined 2nd Lieutenant, “ I thought you were a Militia Major ! ”

It is not surprising that the Militia should have a shortage of officers when Militia commission-holders are snubbed by Pall Mall (or rather as we shall have to say for the future, Whitehall), and ignored by their brothers of the line. To say the least, an officer of Militia has to put himself to a great deal of inconvenience. He is obliged to give up much of his time to his regimental duties, and if he is a busy man (as I was for example) only a

UNSTEADYING MANŒUVRES

strong love for the profession of arms will cause him to make the sacrifice. When I joined the Militia it was at the solicitation of Sydney Blanchard, a man of great literary attainments, who had the reputation of saying a very smart thing about our leading comic periodical.

“ Really the *London Charivari* grows duller and duller. I think somebody ought to start a *Comic Punch* ! ”

He was a very amusing fellow, and I shall never forget my first appearance at our annual inspection, when he and I carried the regimental colours, huge standards in those days. We drifted about aimlessly for some time and then found a safe anchorage in the middle of the band.

Those who commanded the Militia used rather to swear at the autumn manœuvres as unsteady the men. I am not at all sure that we did quite as much work at Aldershot as we did at Dalston from a drill sergeant's point of view, but the association of the Militia with the Regulars was in my humble opinion of very great value. I remember that during the first autumn manœuvres which started from Cove Common, our lines were between the 91st and the 101st, and our men became great pals with the men of the 91st. I have no doubt, even after this long lapse of time, that were the 7th Rifle Brigade and the Sutherland Highlanders to find themselves near one another, the old friendship would be revived. Friendships and hatreds have long traditions. The unfortunate

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conflict between the 2nd 24th and the King's Own Light Infantry Militia is remembered, I believe, in both corps after the passing of half-a-century. Although I had not obtained my "third star"—as would be said nowadays, I was in command of a Company in 1871. We were part of a flying column and supposed to be in a country where war was raging. Peace disappeared on such a date at midnight. An enterprising Cavalry officer suddenly surrounded his opponents' corps, arriving about half-past twelve. The Umpires were called up from their night's rest and ordered the too impetuous horseman to retire. It was unreasonable to commence hostilities before breakfast! At the end of our first day's march we had to pitch our tents. With great zeal I saw that all the tents of my men were properly pitched. When it came to see to my own canvas there were no pegs left to assist in its erection.

"Never mind, sir," said one of my non-coms. "We will find some pegs after dark and have everything right before you want to turn in."

My friend was as good as his word. When I came to my tent after mess I found it a mass of pegs. During the night I heard shouts in the other lines telling of falling canvas. My tent had evidently benefited by the successful efforts of a foraging party.

I am sorry to say that the golden rule of the Autumn Manœuvres of 1871 was "when in doubt, march a Militia regiment twenty miles before

MARCHING DOWN THE GUARDS

breakfast." We had much marching to do, but our hard-as-nails little costers never complained. They took it all in the day's work. I remember we had the honour of marching down the Guards. In the early morning we had to stand aside while the Household Brigade passed us. We had to put up with sneers and general derision. We certainly did not look our best with beards of two days' growth, ill-fitting tunics and ridiculous forage caps. But, later in the day, we passed the pick of the British Army absolutely exhausted. Then came what I have heard called the "*ironie Britanique*" from scores of voices: "You ain't no good without a housemaid and a perambulator." "Why didn't you bring an omnibus?" "What price Ambulance Wagons?" "Aren't you sorry you ain't back at Wellington Barracks?" "Shall I fetch you a cab, my lord?" and the rest of it. The Guards, it is only right to say, received the chaff in very good part, and afterwards, when they came across the Tower Hamlets Militia, treated them with cheery respect.

When I was forced, partly by indifferent health and partly by the press of journalistic engagements—including the Assistant Editorship of *Punch*—to retire from the Militia, I still clung to my commission as a Captain in the reserve of officers. I could only retain the rank by training for one month with a Line battalion. It was September, and I wanted to remain in London, so I boldly suggested that I should be put on the strength of

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the Guards. As I have mentioned, my brother Albert was in the War Office, and I think I owed it to a large extent to his good offices that my request was granted. The late Duke of Cambridge, then the Field Marshal Commanding in Chief, "saw no objection to this officer being posted to the 2nd Battalion of Coldstream Guards," and posted I was. So I can boast that I have served in the Household Brigade. I was immensely amused when I reported myself at Wellington Barracks. Everybody seemed to be on leave save a Captain, who was my junior, and a few subalterns being taught their drill by the Sergeant-major. I believe I dismissed the guard and took prisoners on one occasion. As a matter of fact, I made everything as easy as I could, gave myself unlimited leave, and only looked in now and again to see (when I was senior on parade) that "everything was going on smoothly and nobody was getting into mischief." I believe that there was another Militia officer put on the strength of the Guards in Ireland, so my case was not unique.

But although for some years I reported myself at Pall Mall annually according to the Regulations, I never was called again to serve a month's training with a regiment of the Line. I fancy the authorities must have been afraid that I would ask again to serve with the Guards, and quote my own case as a precedent. I have never been gazetted out of the reserve of officers, and I am not sure that during the late War in South Africa I could not

FIT FOR A "DUG OUT"

have been called upon to serve as what my two sons (both in the R.A.) call a "dug out."

The first Autumn Manœuvres showed up the defects of our transport. The entire impedimenta of the flying columns was carried in carts with civilian drivers. The men were not under any discipline and our baggage came to hopeless grief. I shall never forget the encampment one Sunday morning. The men had fought a battle and had reached the spot selected for passing the night, but no tents were in view. I happened to be in charge of the baggage guard of my regiment, and our waggons arrived at 11 p.m. We had to pitch our tents by the light of the moon. Most of the other battalions were in no better plight. The next morning the sight was an amusing one. The whole army were jumbled up into hopeless confusion. No one knew the habitation of anybody. The Duke was very angry, and called upon all officers in charge of baggage guards to forward a special report. I obeyed H.R.H. by sending in a paper which would have done equally well for *Punch*. I gave a "rather humorous" description of my adventures, which I fancy must have been unique in the collection of reports.

Fortunately it was before we got into this hopeless muddle that we received a visit from that eminent warrior, General Von Blumenthal. I had had the honour of meeting him during the recently terminated Franco-German War. The King's Own Tower Hamlets had been in strict training

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for six weeks or two months, and were in splendid form. When the General came near our lines I was told off to attend him. He was extremely kind and courteous, and expressed himself very favourably impressed with my regiment. I told him that we were only Militia—that as Militia we were infinitely inferior to the Regular Army.

“ But for all that it is a very fine regiment,” said General Von Blumenthal, “ a very fine regiment indeed. And how long have you been out ? ”

I am very bad at dates, so I answered, “ that we were embodied yesterday.” So we were, but the statement was not only a *soppressio veri* but a *suggestio falsi*. Of course we were embodied yesterday—and several weeks before. General Von Blumenthal evidently assumed that my regiment had only been called together for twenty-four hours, and I patriotically allowed him to remain under that delusion.

It was with the greatest possible regret that I retired from the Militia. I was very fond of soldiering. However, ill-health, now, thank God, happily restored, and the claims on my time arising from my journalistic duties was the cause. I exchanged from the 7th Rifle Brigade into the 4th Cheshire. I only appeared for one day on parade of my last regiment when the doctor ordered me home, sick. The late Lord Lock was my kind-hearted Colonel, who came and sat with me at my quarters in Macclesfield until I was well enough to be moved to London.

GENERAL VON BLUMENTHAL

To the training I received in the Militia I believe I owe what little aptitude for editing I possess. It gave me confidence in moments of difficulty. I have been careful not to lose my head under trying circumstances. So, when on one occasion the publisher of a paper with which I was connected, was found at the moment of publication to be hopelessly intoxicated, I took his place. Besides this power of assuming command in cases of emergency, my training gave me sufficient knowledge to conduct with some measure of success a *Naval and Military Magazine*. I found that soldiers and sailors, when they write, have an excellent style. Certainly, I occasionally came across cranks who wished to call me out when I presumed to edit their articles. But, take it all in all, there is nothing so pleasant as a soldier's life. In the days of my youth I was wont to hear Hortense Schneider in "La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein" express her admiration for the military. She promoted in ten minutes Private Fritz (admirably played by Dupuis) from a simple soldier to a Commander-in-Chief. My career began and ended with the rank of Captain, which I am still proud to retain. I am charmed to be a journalist, I am overjoyed to be a member of the Bar. I have nothing but the pleasantest recollections of my career as a private secretary, and I was never happier than when I had the honour to serve my Sovereign as a Government Clerk. But, having said this (which after all may not be a matter of absorbing interest to the

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general reader), I return to "La Grande Duchesse." For many hundreds of nights at the Varietés, Hortense Schneider declared she "doted on the military." I repeat the declaration, but I have doted on the military all my life.

Some little while ago I was dining beside a lady who was kind enough to say she was very pleased to be seated next to "so interesting a person as myself." She then asked me what I considered to be the greatest achievement of my life. I promptly answered, "The time-fuse I invented when as an Artillery officer of the Auxiliary Forces I was passing through the School of Gunnery at Woolwich."

"What was it called?" asked my fair neighbour

I replied with great pride, "It was known as Captain à Beckett's failure!"

CHAPTER VII

SALAD DAYS ON THE PRESS

The late Sir Augustus Harris—A Quarrel in the Office of the *Glow-worm*—The Practical Jokes of Harold Power—"The Savage Club Papers" of 1867—Stories of J. L. Toole—Robert Browning at Mrs. Skirrow's—The Mysteries of Pantomime—The Dangers of Criticism—Women Journalists—The Work of an American Lady—A Rest Cure for Journalists.

I HAVE noticed that most books of recollections become more or less autobiographical. It is a little difficult if you are telling stories in which you yourself took part to keep yourself from becoming the central figure. You must perforce be a trifle egotistical. The late Sir Augustus Harris—one of the kindest-hearted fellows who ever lived—was particularly anxious to take the lead in everything. When I edited and managed the *Sunday Times* under his proprietor-in-chiefship I found him a most delightful companion, but always anxious to take the lead. There is only one man living who I think could have adequately supplied his place as a London Theatrical Manager. Of course I refer to that admirable and illustrious Crichton, the German Emperor.

Well, Gus and I were once discussing religion. Rather to my surprise, he expressed views of a strongly High Church character. He was really at heart a sincerely religious man and consequently an exceedingly good fellow.

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"My dear Gus," I said, "I really think you ought to be received into the Church of Rome."

My proprietor-in-chief smiled and asked how it could be managed.

"Oh, there would be no difficulty," I replied, "As a rule, the ceremony is of the simplest character, with a couple of performers—a priest and a penitent. But an exception could be made in your case. Instead of a room you should have a good church—say the Oratory. Then there might be a magnificent ecclesiastical procession. Orders of men and women, bishops, and banners. You might be led up to the altar."

"Yes, I see," returned Gus, "anything else?"

"Why, of course," I continued in the same tone of banter, "we might take the precedent of Napoleon the Great being crowned by the Holy Father. You should be received by the Pope."

"No, that wouldn't do," cried Gus. "I must be the central figure!"

And I am afraid that the recollector of recollections must also be to a large extent the central figure. With this apology for my egoism, I continue the story of my life. After leaving the Civil Service I obtained no regular employment until I became associated with the *Glow-worm*, a paper which, at the age of twenty, I edited. It was a marvellous pennyworth, and its career from first to last would fill the pages of a good-sized volume. Before now I have referred to its foundation, rise and fall, so I will content myself on this occasion

“BEEF OF OLD ENGLAND SUPERSEDED”

with merely referring to some of the staff with whom I had the pleasure of coming into contact. My last word reminds me that I had a serious quarrel with one of the directors who was anxious to assume what I considered too great a control. I am not at this distance of time speaking by the card, but I fancy the dispute commenced on the subject of an article.

My director wanted me to write a leader upon Somebody's Biscuits. I objected that the subject was not of sufficient importance to warrant such a proceeding.

“Not of sufficient importance!” exclaimed my director. “Why, you young idiot, if it is published, Mr. Somebody will take six insertions of a column, in the back page.”

“I consider such an arrangement degrading,” I returned, with considerable dignity; “and I really must request you to be so kind as not to address me as ‘you young idiot.’ I am not a young idiot. I am the Editor of a leading London evening paper, and such a title is not only insulting but misleading.”

“But you are a young idiot. Who but a young idiot would refuse so valuable an ad.? Now be sensible, why shouldn't you write something about Somebody's Biscuits being the salvation of the British Empire? Here's a capital title for you, ‘The Beef of Old England Superseded.’ Tell me what better subject you could get?”

“Why, the relation of Church to State would

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be far more dignified, or, as the silly season is approaching, the Higher Education of Women would be pleasing."

"Nonsense," was the uncomplimentary rejoinder, "'The Beef of Old England Superseded' is worth twenty of them. Don't you be a donkey."

Not unnaturally this led to angry words, which I regret to add finished in blows. Within half-an-hour my director and I were engaged in fisticuffs. It was then that I regretted that the noble art of self-defence had not been a part of the *curriculum* at Felstead or Honiton. However, my knowledge of anatomy came to my assistance. I knew that if I squeezed a human throat sufficiently long the owner must surely die. As I was squeezing the throat of the director, I noticed with one eye—its fellow was bunged up—that my director was becoming blue in the face. I hailed this symptom as approaching dissolution.

"If you will let go of my throat," gasped out my director, "I will leave off hitting you in the eye."

This seemed a reasonable agreement, so I relinquished my grasp and my eye benefited by the transaction. There was a silence for a few minutes.

"If you want to fight," said my director, "let us fight like gentlemen!"

"All right."

"With pistols, if you like."

"All right."

A DUEL TO THE DEATH

Then, possibly moved by the commercial instinct, my director attempted one last move towards reconciliation.

"You are quite sure you will not write a leader upon Somebody's Biscuits?"

"Somebody and his biscuits be cursed!"

"You have no right to speak disrespectfully of a possible advertiser."

"I decline to discuss the matter further with you."

"Very well, we will fight with pistols."

"All right."

So we marched down through the office of the *Glow-worm*, apparently on the best of terms. Our desire was to keep up appearances before the publisher. When we reached the street my director stopped.

"I have no pistols," said he.

"No more have I."

"We must buy them."

"Can't afford it—you must buy them."

"I'm hanged if I am going to buy your pistol. I will buy my own, but I won't buy yours. Fair play's a jewel—share and share alike."

Then a brilliant idea occurred to me. I had seen Alfred Wigan and Charles Kean in a piece called "Pauline" in which two men fired across a table, only one of the pistols of the brace being loaded. Then I recollected there was some idea of the same sort in Tom Taylor's play of "Still Waters Run Deep."

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"Look here, you shall buy your pistol," I suggested.

"Well, I don't mind that," replied my director.

"Then we will toss up who shall use it."

Fortunately my director had a sense of the ridiculous, and he was immensely amused at the idea of fighting a murderous duel with one pistol, not on account of revenge but for the sake of economy, and he roared with laughter. In spite of my intense resentment—I was very angry—I was obliged to follow suit, and we became partially reconciled. I forget if I yielded to the demand for an article upon "Old England's Beef Superseded." For the sake of British journalism I hope I was firm, but in the interests of the *Glow-worm* I trust I did my best to swell its columns of advertisements. Nowadays I am afraid I should not have been so squeemish. After all, it is the duty of a journalist to encourage native industries.

The *Glow-worm* was a paper published a little before its time. With some omissions which I do not regret, it had many of the features of a modern, up-to-date, daily journal. We tried *feuilletons*. This brought me into communication with Dion Boucicault, who had recently produced a play called "The Flying Scud." I had met him at the table of Edmund Yates and found him one of the most amusing of men. I had seen him, too, at a garden party at Twickenham, when one of the Chappels had been the host of the occasion. At this gathering a great practical joker, the late

“ A ONE-MAN EVENING ”

Harold Power, was also present. Mr. Power undertook to give imitations of popular actors. First we had Buckstone, then Fetchter, then Benjamin Webster.

“ I will now give you an imitation of Mr. Dion Boucicault in the character of *Miles* in the ‘ Colleen Bawn,’ ” and he gave it.

“ Not a bit like the gentleman,” said one of the audience, coming towards Harold, “ not a bit like it.”

“ But I tell you it is, sir, it’s Dion Boucicault to the life. It is Dion Boucicault.”

“ That can’t be, sir, because I am Dion Boucicault, and you aren’t me.”

“ Look at that now,” cried Harold Power, not in the least taken aback. “ All it proves is that a man never knows himself.”

On another occasion—it was when the *Punch* staff gave an amateur performance for a charity at Manchester—Harold Power managed at a subsequent dinner to propose and respond to all the toasts of the evening’s entertainment. Before the chairman could rise, Mr. Power rose for him, and anticipated all the speeches. At first the audience were astonished, and then, joining in the fun of the idea, they applauded him amidst roars of laughter. It is said that Harold Power afterwards asserted that if artists organised a one-man show, he did not see why he should not follow their example. “ The dinner had been a one-man evening,” which it certainly must have been.

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When I saw Dion Boucicault he was playing at the Lyceum in a piece called "The Long Strike." It had a sensation—in his dramas Boucicault always had sensations—which consisted of a message sent from a seaport to the heroine coming from London. A ship was about to depart, carrying away a very important witness to something or other. The heroine was anxious to bring him back. She appears at a telegraph office and gets the clerk to send the message. It is a question whether it can be delivered in time to have the desired result. The curtain falls on the clerk in charge informing the young lady that he has read that the witness is being rowed ashore. If telephones and wireless telegraphs had existed in the days of Dion Boucicault the effect would have been brought about with greater neatness.

I interviewed Dion Boucicault in his dressing-room at the Lyceum, and while I was speaking to him his wife—once the heroine of the "Colleen Bawn," *née* Agnes Robinson—rushed in to intercede for the remission of a fine of one of the "extra ladies" who had been late at rehearsal. Mrs. Boucicault did not see me as I was ensconced in a large armchair and thus I had an opportunity of being a hidden witness of her kindness of heart. I am glad to say that the charming lady is still living. It was only a year or two ago that she trod the boards with her old charm and distinction. Boucicault was pleased with the idea of converting his melodrama into a romance to be published in

FEATURES OF THE "WORM"

the *Glow-worm* in daily instalments, and suggested that the novelization should be entrusted to the author of "Charlie Thornhill." The story was given in due course. It was a novelty at the moment, as the idea of publishing a *feuilleton* in a daily paper had been abandoned since the disappearance of the *Morning Chronicle*, ruined by its alleged connection with Napoleon III, Emperor of the French.

Then there was another feature of the "*Worm*," as the paper was affectionately termed by those who were its contributors, which might possibly be copied even to-day. We used to publish every evening on the lines of the Paris *Entr'act* a copy of all the play-bills of London. Nowadays, when there are usually long *queues* of people waiting for admission to the pits and galleries of our principal theatres, such a bill would be decidedly attractive to thousands. I throw out the suggestion for what it is worth. I remember in the days of the "*Worm*" we had some difficulty about copyright, and had to tell a story to introduce the names of the plays and characters at the various temples of the drama. We had not I regret to say, thought of the modern modes of advertising—such as gratuitous visits to Margate, or economical excursions to the Crystal Palace—but we did a little in the same direction. For instance, at a labour public meeting a copy of the *Standard* was publicly burned by the chairman. We got up a rival public meeting near our office—the site of the Vaudeville

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Theatre—and burned the “*Worm*.” But I must confess the demonstration fell rather flat and attracted—save in our own columns—little attention.

Turning over the first series of *Savage Club Papers*, to which I contributed in 1867, I found something of interest which I think worthy of reproduction, although I have already, in another place—a few pages back—said a great deal about *cercles* and their members. The late Andrew Halliday—who could claim to have started the realistic in the drama by having introduced a real hansom cab on the boards of Drury Lane Theatre—writing as Editor, declared “that the Savage Club was founded to supply the want which Dr. Samuel Johnson and his friends experienced when they founded the Literary Club. A little band of authors, journalists and artists felt the need of a place of re-union where, in their hours of leisure, they might gather together and enjoy each other’s society, apart from the publicity of that which was known in Johnson’s time as the ‘Coffee House,’ and equally apart from the chilling splendour of the modern club.” The “chilling splendour” was distinctly good. Then came an account of how the name of “The Savage” was chosen in preference to “The Addison,” “The Johnson,” “The Goldsmith” and “The Shakespeare.” Then Andrew Halliday announces “the qualification for admission to our club is to be *a working-man in literature or art and a good fellow*.” The italics were those of

THE SAVAGE CLUB IN 1867

the Editor. Then he continued, "the best answer to the charge of cliquism will be found in the list of contributors to the volume." And certainly the table of contents is very suggestive. It is headed by J. R. Planché, one of the most polished of burlesque writers and an officer in the Heralds' College. Then comes James Hannay, described by one of his contemporaries as "a scholar without a degree and a gentleman without an estate." It was he who spoke of another contributor to the volume, John Oxenford, as reminding him of an Italian mountain "with snow on the summit and the vine at the heart." Then came T. W. Robertson, H. J. Byron, Artemus Ward, Clement W. Scott, Walter Thornbury, W. S. Gilbert, Henry S. Leigh, Arthur Sketchley, Tom Hood, W. B. Tegelmerer, J. C. Brough, T. H. Escott, E. L. Blanchard and Edmund Falconer. Of these only three survive, and I make a fourth. I find that the late Godfrey Turner writes about "The Inns of Jamaica," and commences his article, "There are no inns in Jamaica." Last year I spent a very pleasant summer holiday in the land of never-ending June, to which I refer in another place, and can certainly say that a great change has come over the spirit of the dream since 1867. There were some splendid inns or rather hostelries in Jamaica in 1906. I stayed at the Constant Spring and it was excellent.

I remember a dinner given to Godfrey Turner on his return from Jamaica—I suppose he must

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have visited the West Indies in connection with the rule of Governor Eyre—when James Hannay was in the chair. The health of John Oxenford was proposed, and he was asked to return thanks for “the Drama,” as the dramatic critic of the *Times*. He was even then an elderly man with white hair, and the reference to “the vine at the heart” indicated his love of good cheer. His notices had been termed as being lacking in initiative—he did not praise nor blame. “Well, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,” said John Oxenford, “I can at least claim one merit. I have never forgotten that there is a private life apart from a public life. I have never written a line in any periodical with which I have been connected which has made a wife cry and hide the paper from her husband and the children.” Happy the writer who can say the same.

Looking through the pages of the “Drama of To-day,” by my dear friend the late Clement Scott, who had worked with me in the War Office, and written with me for the First Series of the *Savage Club Papers*, I come to a reference to myself.

After praising our friend in common, Francis Cowley Burnand, for his sparkling wit and his jokes, “which were sarcastic, doubtless, but never cruel,” he continued: “After this remarkable humourist, I should give a *proprium accessit* to my friend, Arthur William à Beckett, Frank Burnand’s loyal assistant on *Punch*. I think I have laughed with him as loudly as with most men. But

A GAME AT ECARTÉ

Arthur à Beckett's jokes were like those of Edward A. Sothern, Billy Florence and Johnny Toole, rather of the practical kind than repartee or *bon mot*." I am afraid, my dear friend, by my own confession, has proved his case when I remember my treatment of the part of the Third Officer in "The Lady of Lyons" related in another place. But Clement, I have no doubt, when he wrote those lines, had in his mind a little by-play that we had in a piece written by a solicitor, produced at the St. George's Hall. I forget what it was all about, but I know on the suggestion of our friend in common, Richard Corney Grain (then practising at the Bar) we were introduced as two useful supers. Clement Scott and I were put down opposite one another to play a game of *ecarté*.

"All you have to do," said the author, "is to cut the cards and deal them out. If you can appear to the audience as if you were really taking an interest in the game, so much the better. But mind, no talking. All in dumb show—otherwise you will interfere with the dialogue and spoil the general effect."

We bowed gravely. We played and I lost. I emptied the contents of my purse on the table. We played and I again lost. Then went my watch and rings and my necktie. But now the demon of gambling had seized me. I took off my coat and lost that. Then I sacrificed my waistcoat. Then lost my boots. Then I allowed my face to rest upon my hands and wept bitterly while

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Clement Scott bent over me and tried to console me. The end of the act was reached and the curtain fell amidst loud applause and roars of laughter. The author was furious.

"Why, what is the matter?" I asked innocently, resuming my wearing apparel. "You told us that if we appeared as if we were really taking an interest in the game it would be so much the better. We carefully obeyed your instructions. We took particular care that the audience should see that we were deeply interested in the game, very deeply indeed."

But the author was not to be appeased, and no doubt, if he still be living, bears us to this day some ill-will. Some people are so unreasonable.

In the paragraph I have quoted from Clement Scott's work on the drama, allusion is made to "Johnny Toole." It was only a short while ago that one of the most amusing of the "Old Brigade" was laid to his rest. At the time of his death I was asked to furnish some recollections, but I found myself unequal to the task. As I had known him in the Garrick Club and at the "Savage" he was the most delightful of companions, but when I saw him listless and all but lifeless during his long and weary illness at Brighton, the contrast to his old self was too painful for words. Toole always treated me with great kindness. He told me that his first public entertainment, a lecture in Southwark, was presided over by my father, who was the Stipendiary Magistrate of the district. The

“ TRYING A MAGISTRATE ”

room was crowded, and he got on splendidly until quite the end of the performance. Then a man in the middle of the hall got on his legs and shouted to the chairman.

“ Your worship,” he cried excitedly, “ the lecturer has insulted me. He has described Brown as an idiot. I am Brown. He meant me, and I won’t stand it any longer.”

Toole declared to my father that he had not the faintest intention of referring to anyone in particular. Brown was absolutely an imaginary character. My father announced this, but Brown, taking off his coat, made for the platform.

“ I tell you, sir,” said my father in his most gravely judicial tones, “ I am a Metropolitan police magistrate, and will not permit a breach of the peace.”

“ Quite right, your worship,” cried Toole ; “ save me—save me.” My father noticed a policeman who had come in to spend an hour off duty in the hall.

“ Constable, arrest that man.”

The policeman put on his hat, saluted, and took Brown by the scruff of the neck.

“ What are you doing ? ” shouted the person under arrest ; “ this ain’t a police court.”

“ Never you mind what it is. You’ll be lucky if you don’t find yourself at the station in a jiffy—so just hook out of it.”

“ If you are ready to keep the peace,” said my father, “ I will let you go with a caution.”

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And so the matter ended. Such was the story told me by my comrade, poor Johnny Toole, one evening at the Garrick Club. He was very fond of practical jokes, and had an amiable weakness for giving boxes of chocolates to the children of his friends. One evening our family party, which included three small boys, were enjoying a farce at Toole's Theatre. I had gone round "behind" to make enquiry about "On Strike," a play of mine that I thought would suit Johnny to perfection. I found my friend in his dressing-room. He was full of amusing anecdotes, but I paid less attention to him than usual as I recognised the brown paper covers of "On Strike" under the weight of a heavy clumsy clod-hopping boot. To say the least, as the author was present, this evidence of careless disregard was disrespectful.

"By the way, I want to talk to you about that play of yours, 'What's a Clock?'"

"That isn't my play. My play is called 'On Strike,' and a very good title," I returned with dignity.

"All a matter of taste. I should prefer 'What's a Clock?' Well, I am afraid I can't manage it. It will offend the working-man, and where would my pit be without the 'orny' and of labour?"

"Behind your stalls, I should say."

"Yes, that's all very well. But business is business, and 'What's a Clock?' I'm afraid won't do."

"Well, give it me back," I returned, rather

MEMORIES OF J. L. TOOLE

in a huff. "I am sure I shall get rid of it elsewhere."

"Of course you will. Give Buckstone a chance, or Henry Irving, or Mr. Fetchter. It's more in their line."

"Quite so. Now where is it?"

Toole looked everywhere. At last I came to the rescue and pointed to my play—it was ultimately produced by Edgar Bruce and did very well indeed at the Court Theatre—lying under the great muddy, clumsy boot.

"Oh, yes, there it is! What sharp eyes you have. Take the boot with it."

"What for?"

"To give to the boys," cried Toole, roaring with laughter, and then I found that he had passed me a papier maché bon-bon box filled with chocolates.

Johnny Toole was the brightest of companions. When poor Artemus Ward was buried in England, pending the removal of his body to America, Toole and I followed in the funeral *cortége* in the same mourning coach. When we left Piccadilly, where poor Artemus Ward had chambers immediately opposite the site of the now vanished Egyptian Hall, we were as serious as could be. But as we got farther away Johnny began telling amusing stories and trying our gravity to the utmost. I had to draw down the blinds to the carriage windows. On our reaching the cemetery we had to suffer a further trial. The clergyman who had to read the service, finding that his congregation

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were chiefly journalists and actors, insisted upon giving a dramatic rendering of his text. He introduced different voices and gesticulated wildly.

When the will of J. L. Toole was proved, it was found that he had amassed a very considerable fortune. I believe that most of the money was made in the provinces, although he had several successful seasons in town, notably during the run of "Walker, London," and when travesties were being provided for him by his friend and mine, F. C. Burnand.

The only time I met Robert Browning was at a luncheon party given by the late Mrs. Skirrow, whose hospitality was much prized by all the talents. Toole was one of the guests, and I was amused to find Robert Browning trying to persuade him to play in a farce he promised he would write for him.

"Very pleased indeed, Mr. Browning, but I must think of the booking. Your name would be first-rate on the bill, but would the play be all right?"

"I would do my best," said the poet modestly.

"I know you would," returned Toole quietly.

"Come, I say, I know what you shall do. I will look out a farce from our friends on the other side of the Channel and send it to you. You won't mind just putting under the title 'translated from the French,' as our friends over the Channel are so touchy you know."

Robert Browning promised to give the matter

THE DANGERS OF CRITICISM

further consideration. But so far as I know he never produced a farce "translated from the French."

To return to my salad days as a journalist. I never had a better time. Although born in the "forties," when Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer Lytton and Douglas Jerrold—all friends of my father—were in their prime, I grew out, so to speak, of literary society. I was a free-lance in a sense that I cared for nobody, although I am not so sure that nobody cared for me. As dramatic critic, as well as editor of the *Glow-worm*, I used to write smart criticisms that certainly would have been cut out had kind old John Oxenford been my editor. I was perfectly shocked in later years to find what wounds I had unconsciously inflicted. An excellent actor still living met me some time ago, and in talking to him of old times, referred to the *Glow-worm*.

"I should like to meet the dramatic critic of that paper. He wrote a notice about me more than twenty years ago."

"I was the dramatic critic," I said with some little pride.

"Then, sir, I must break my vow. We have had many pleasant conversations, and if you will permit me to say so, you seem to be quite an amiable personage."

"You are very kind."

"Not at all. And taking this into consideration I have determined to break my vow."

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“ And what was your vow ? ”

“ To kill you at sight.”

And then it appeared that I had written some thoughtless piece of chaff that had given acute pain to a struggling young actor. I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself, and said so. It was suggested at the recent conference of the Institute of Journalists that literature should be made a profession by the foundation of a University for training toilers with the pen. I am sure it is not good that a lad who has just ceased to be a legal infant should be entrusted with editorial responsibilities. Before I was one-and-twenty I was an editor, and in that capacity was writing all sorts of smart articles. It has been my life-long regret that, as editor of one paper—with a brilliant staff—I was party to the appearance of certain cartoons that, although misunderstood, were of questionable taste. It is ancient history now. They appeared about forty years ago, but a reference to them a short while since induced me in an earlier volume to give the full story of what I feel was at least an error of judgment. The fault was a very little one. Still, I hold that as a training at the Bar is necessary to make a good judge, so a training as a working journalist for many years in the capacity of a subordinate should precede promotion to the editorial sanctum. I used to be called “ the boy editor,” and boys will be boys. To quote from Clement Scott : “ Dear me ! how many papers have I not helped to start—papers political,

THE PEN AS SHARP AS THE SWORD

papers theatrical, papers social—in connection with my old friends, Sir Douglas Straight, a born journalist, a popular barrister and an excellent judge; Hamilton Hume, Ernest Warren, the gentle, patient, unobtrusive Ashby Sterry, a friend of forty years; and genial, good-natured Arthur à Beckett?" I quote this passage to show that with my intimates I was considered "genial and good-natured," and yet I had made an actor desirous of shedding my blood. A pen is a very dangerous weapon. Of course the journalists who invade the sacred *vie intime* to gain halfpence are beneath contempt. But the average decent fellow who would scorn to do anything unworthy of the traditions handed to him by his forefathers may yet cause any amount of unintentional harm. "Youth must have its fling." But let it not be with printers' ink.

It will have been seen from the quotation I have made from the work of the late Clement Scott, that that amiable scholar and gentleman did not think there was much trouble in starting a new paper, and given a capitalist who had no objection to risking a thousand or two, or even a hundred or so, there was not. I believe someone of the modern school has declared that every first number can be made a financial success. That may have been true enough years ago, but nowadays people are so surfeited with fresh papers that it is difficult to distinguish the new from the old.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

Whenever I had an idea for a paper I always sought the aid as contributors of my two brothers, Gilbert, who began life in the Treasury, Albert, until only two years ago of the War Office, Clement Scott, and, when the venture was worthy of his notice, Frank Burnand. In the *Britannia*, which I started in conjunction with the late Charles Hambro, member for Weymouth, and the present Earl of Kilmorey, I had on the staff both my brothers, Burnand (who contributed a most excellent serial called "The Adventures of Major Blake," which would well bear re-publication), Dr. Gilbert, J. Palgrave Simpson, T. H. Escott, Douglas Straight, Frank Marshall and Alfred Austin, the present poet laureate. The *spécialité* of the magazine was coloured pictures. Our chief illustrator was Matt. Morgan, a very clever artist, who could turn his pencil or paint-brush to anything. He was the chief artist at Covent Garden and invented and produced a series of very beautiful transformation scenes for the Christmas pantomimes. On one occasion just after the appearance of the *Britannia* magazine, he was at a loss for a central figure to act as the climax of the picture. He had sketched out all sorts of wonderful groups of flying fairies and the like, and paused for a moment.

"Why not *Britannia*?" I suggested, full of my new venture.

The idea was adopted. *Britannia* became the end-all of the transformation scene, and Matt. had

THE MYSTERIES OF PANTOMIME

the fine audacity to repeat the frontispiece of our periodical.

"You see," he explained, "it will serve as a magnificent advertisement. People who watch the development of the realms of joy to the home of the brave and true will not now be able to declare that they have never seen or heard of the blessed thing."

I am not at all sure that this violent introduction of an advertisement into the transformation scene did not lead to more jests of the clown about Somebody's Biscuits and Someone-else's Patent Thingumies. I was present when one *entrepreneur* was arranging for the "ads." for the after part, when a tobacconist haggled about the terms. He really could not afford to pay so high a price in cash.

"Then," said the *entrepreneur*, "I will take it out in goods."

By this arrangement the *entrepreneur* became possessed of hundreds of boxes of cigars.

"What *will* you do with them?" I asked.

"Why, send them as a reminder to all my friends who do not ask for orders, that I am still in the land of the living, and that so is the pantomime."

"But have you any friends not asking for orders?"

"A rather sore subject," was the reply. "Don't spoil the coming Yule Tide season by attempting to discuss it."

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

Perhaps the most amusing paper—to its contributors—that I ever started was one called *Black and White*. The second title was “An Organ Playing Two Tunes.” The late Hamilton Hume had just ceased to edit the *Will o’ the Wisp* and I another comic paper, and we joined hands. We divided the paper between us. I, in those distant days, was a Liberal and he a Conservative. In my part of the paper everything was Liberal, from the cartoon to the two-line paragraph. He devoted his half to the interests of the opposite party. All went very well for a time when one week he asked me to undertake the editorship of the whole. The temptation was too great. The staff on the other side of the cartoons had been abusing us professionally for weeks and months. I reversed the policy for that week only, and caused them to sing our praises in the most fulsome fashion.

“It wasn’t fair!” exclaimed poor Hamilton Hume. “How am I to explain my change of views when I resume the editorship next week?”

“Don’t explain it.”

I am sorry to say that the incident led to the beginning of the end of *Black and White*. My colleague took the practical joke seriously to heart and, at length, the paper ceased to be published. Another reason which was, perhaps, almost as strong was the fact that *Black and White* about this time ceased to pay its expenses.

There are no persons for whom I hold a higher

A LADY JOURNALIST

respect than the lady—or, as they prefer to be styled—woman journalists. However, sometimes they are a little difficult to manage. When I was editing a well-known weekly paper, one of the chief proprietors used to send me all sorts and conditions of females, from veteran to recruit. On one occasion a lady called and insisted on seeing me in spite of a notice board informing enquirers that the Editor was “Out.” I had three words with a peg hole to each. “In,” “Out,” “Engaged.” At first I used to have the peg placed opposite to “Engaged,” but such a crowd collected that very shortly I had made the peg opposite “Out” a fixture. In spite of this intimation of absence, the lady to whom I referred insisted on invading my sanctum. She lighted a cigarette and helped herself to a whiskey and soda.

“Don’t mind me,” she said. “If you are busy, I am not, and I can wait.”

Finding it was hopeless to try to get rid of her, I made a virtue of a necessity, and asked her if I could do anything for her.

“Why, certainly,” and then she told me that she had come to write for me. She was kind enough to call me “Guv’nor,” and was generally unconventional. I was at my wits’ end what to do. At last I made a suggestion.

“My dear madam, I shall be very pleased to have the service of your pen. Write what you please, but pray garnish your article with a few Americanisms. Talk about ‘small potatoes,’

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

and 'poppur' and 'calculate' and 'guess' to your heart's content."

"I will do that," returned my fair visitor. "Oh yes, say I know my work. I've not been a newspaper woman for the last twenty years for nothing. You bet I will turn out something that'll make the hair grow! And what do you propose to call me, Guv'nor?"

"Why, an American girl," I answered. "That'll give you a free hand to say whatever you please. Nobody will be in the least surprised at what an American girl will say."

"Right you are! Proceed. I bet I'll lick all creation. Oh, now, just you wait!"

And when she did write under the title of "An American Girl" she sent in such maudling twaddle that a correspondent wrote to ask me why I had got a sentimental curate on my staff, and what I meant by insulting the United States.

The "American Girl" nearly landed me in a duel!

I had been editing all sorts and conditions of periodicals, and there had come a pause. The Franco-German War had broken out. I had nothing at the moment particularly to do in Fleet Street, so I thought I would go over to the seat of hostilities to see how the combatants were progressing. Some five-and-thirty years later the incident was to some extent repeated. Owing to circumstances out of my control, things were terribly dull in Fleet Street, so I packed up my

A REST CURE

portmanteau and danced across the sea for some four thousand miles to deliver a lecture and spend a week-end in Jamaica.

Here let me suggest that there is nothing better in the world for a hard-working journalist than the perfect rest of a fairly long voyage. If you can but escape from the G.P.O. for a fortnight or ten days, all will be well. Select a good liner and take care that she is free from the machinations of Marconi. To secure your rest cure you must be out of reach of wireless telegraphy.

CHAPTER VIII

ABROAD DURING THE WAR

A Journey to Paris during the Third Empire—MM. Pietri and Whitehurst—An Averted Duel—A Chance for the Contents Bill—Amicably Settled—France during the war of 1870-71—Arrested at Amiens—The Disadvantage of Speaking English—In Germany during the War—The Sad Case of the French Officers—Hatred of Foreigners in France and Germany during the War.

THE year 1870-71 was a terrible one in France, and I was in sympathy with our lively neighbours. Things were decidedly dull in Fleet Street, and I thought it advisable to look abroad. My editorship of a satirical paper had come to an abrupt conclusion, and *Britannia*, the second horse of my career, had bolted. There is nothing more depressing than the efforts to keep a moribund publication alive. The falling-off of advertisements, the increase of "unhappy returns," were so many stabs to a sensitive heart. To use a colloquialism of the period, I was "down on my luck." On the Continent the Prussians were invading France. I had seen something of the Emperor. I had never met him personally, but I had paid a visit to the Tuileries to see his *chef du Cabinet*. The interview had been of an amusing character. We—the proprietors—had found great difficulty in obtaining a sale for our paper on the Boulevards. I went over to Paris to see what could be done. In those days, nearly forty years ago, I had distinctly the courage of my opinions,

INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR

so before leaving London I obtained an audience of the French Ambassador, the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne. I found him a most charming gentleman. He had, however, one drawback from my point of view, he did not seem to understand a word of English. This was rather embarrassing as my knowledge of the French language did not head the list of my accomplishments. When my friend Burnand (a more perfect French scholar than myself) and I used to go across the water for a short holiday we frequently spoke in the language of the country. I insisted that we did so that we might not be understood by the natives.

The Ambassador was charming, but seemed to be a little uncertain as to my requirements. I explained that some English papers were sold in the kiosks.

"But yes."

We were not. We wanted to be sold in the kiosks. I would go to Paris and see about it. Then a secretary or some other official was called in, and I left the Embassy with a pass securing me safe conduct for myself and portmanteau to the French capital. On my arrival at the Grand Hotel I sought an interview with the *chef du Cabinet*, whom I found ensconced in a comfortable room in the Tuileries. As I entered the precincts of the Palace in a cab the sentries presented arms. I liked the sensation. At Aldershot when I donned my uniform as a Militiaman I got a lot of military "compliments," but they never reached

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the degree of field officer. I returned the salute with so much dignity that the sentinel seemed in doubt whether or no he should turn out the Guard. Then I was received by men in livery and led up a staircase. A door was open as I passed along a passage, and I noticed a number of military toys in a room that had been recently occupied. A bright-looking lad passed me smiling amiably. He wished me "Good morning," and said politely that he was very fond of the English. I found on enquiry that it was the Prince Imperial. Poor little gentleman! A year or two later he was destined to accompany his ill-fated father to his "baptism of fire" on the German frontier. Then were to come exile in England and death in South Africa. I saw him once again. It was at Chiselhurst, when he was chief mourner at his father's funeral. Poor little gentleman! Bright, clever, a thoroughly good fellow, so his companions at Woolwich said. A thoroughly good fellow.

I was ushered in to the *chef*—I fancy it was M. Pietri—and introduced myself as "éditeur." This was an initial mistake, as "éditeur" means a publisher, not an editor. The *chef* seemed rather surprised. I was a youngster of about two-and-twenty and juvenile in appearance for my years. My paper, I told him, had been unfairly treated. Why were we not sold on the Boulevards?

He said he did not know, and asked why he was troubled with an *affaire de boutique*? His tone

A VISIT TO THE TUILERIES

annoyed me, and, to use a modern colloquialism, I "went for him." I explained to him—my eloquence only being impeded by an imperfect acquaintance with the Gallic tongue—that the power of the Press was immense; that I was accustomed as an *éditeur* (publisher) to be treated with the utmost deference in my own country, and that I considered his tone not polite. "*Voyez le prochain numero, Monsieur. Voyez le prochain numero !*"

Then the absurdity of the situation struck me. Here was I, a stripling, in the private apartments of the Tuileries with the roll of drums in the courtyard audible, threatening one of the Emperor's ministers with what I would write about him because he had not treated me with what I considered proper respect ! I could not help it. I spoiled the effect of my magnificent peroration by roaring with laughter. The *chef*, who was becoming as angry as myself, found my hilarity infectious. His stern features relaxed into a smile, and after a moment he was laughing as heartily as myself. Then he said I was "bon enfant," and we became friends. He set to work to help me. The matter was not in his hands nor in the hands of his august master, "Sa Majesté." I should have gone to see the Censor of the Press, M. Whitehurst. He was good enough to attend to all matters of supervision of the English Press. So with mutual expressions of goodwill, M. Pietri and I parted. I assured him that if he did read the "*prochain numero*" he

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would only find matter of an entirely agreeable character.

Of course my next interview was with M. Whitehurst. I had heard of him. He was the Paris correspondent of one of the greatest and most respected of our London dailies. I had an uneasy feeling that one of the members of my staff, Frank Marshall, had chaffed him rather unmercifully in the pages of the paper I had the honour to represent. Whitehurst was the first of the descriptive writers of Paris life in high places. He introduced the British Public to the *vie intime* of the Imperial Court. When he departed, his place was to some extent supplied by M. de Blowitz, who represented the *Times* for so many years in Paris under the Republic.

Nothing could have been more courteous than my reception at the hands of Mr. Whitehurst. He was kind enough to say that he had met my father and held the name of à Beckett in high esteem. I explained my mission. When he heard the name of my paper his face fell. His smile disappeared, to be replaced by a severe frown. Had I seen the last copy of my periodical? As a matter of fact, I had not. I had left the paper in the hands of my second-in-command, Frank Marshall, and had not seen it as it had been stopped at the frontier. Then Mr. Whitehurst put on a *pince-nez* and read an article which I recognised at once as the work of that id——, I mean that dear, good chap, Frank Marshall, chaffing my host up hill and down

A VISIT TO MR. WHITEHURST

dale. When Mr. Whitehurst had finished the unlucky screed, he turned to me and asked me what I thought of it.

"Well, of course, it's not bad from a literary point of view, but under all the circumstances of the case, distinctly regrettable."

"You have seen it, no doubt, before?" said Mr. Whitehurst with dignity. He was twice my age and thrice my weight.

"Well, no, I have not, Mr. Whitehurst. As a matter of fact, it is the first time I have had it brought before my notice. I have been here in Paris and I have not been editing the paper since I left London."

"Now you will be good enough to give me the name of your *locum tenens*."

"I am afraid I must decline to do that, Mr. Whitehurst. As a member of the Press, you are aware that an editor who is worth his salt always takes the responsibility when it is a question of shielding a colleague."

"Then I shall commence an action against you for libel."

I hope I am not a physical coward even now when I am three times as old as I was as a boy editor. Three or four decades ago I certainly had good nerves, but I must confess that when Mr. Whitehurst threatened me with an action for libel I was frightened. My paper was well intentioned, but all the contributors, with scarcely an exception, were Civil Servants. Dear old Frank Marshall

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was in the Record Office, another of my colleagues was in the Treasury, and had a brother in the Diplomatic Service. Another was in the Admiralty, another in the War Office.

"I shall make it my business," continued Mr. Whitehurst, piling up the agony, "to find out the names of the contributors to this paper, and if they happen to be in the service of the Crown there will be—to put it prettily—the deuce to pay."

"Ah, yes, to be sure, Mr. Whitehurst," I stammered. "There does not seem to be any other way out of it. Well, I suppose I must say with regret, good morning."

"If the incident had occurred on this side of the Channel," resumed Mr. Whitehurst with great dignity, "of course we would have settled the matter without calling in the assistance of the gentlemen of the long robe."

My hand was on the handle of the door. I turned and spoke.

"What, do without an action for libel? How could that be managed?"

"Why, by your meeting me either at Boulogne or Ostend and giving me satisfaction. It is done here every day, but of course, as we are Englishmen, it is impossible."

"Why impossible?" I asked eagerly.

I saw my opportunity. I had been in an action for libel when I was a lad of twenty in the days of the *Glow-worm* for saying that the part of a leading actor had been "efficiently spoken by the

A HOSTILE ENCOUNTER

prompter" (as a matter of fact a great deal of it had), and I hated the law courts. Duels were almost perfunctory performances. The chances were thousands to one against anything really serious happening. And I was a bachelor too, without encumbrances. I had objections, of course, on the score of morality to duelling, but if I fired in the air or did something of that sort, that would be all right. And what a splendid "ad." the encounter would be for the paper. "Our Editor shot in the arm." See Contents Bill. And anything would be better than an action for libel. So I returned, also with dignity:

"If you really will call me out I will come. Not, of course, with pleasure. With great regret, indeed, but not with hesitation."

I was—I flatter myself—very impressive. The blood of the bold Militia moved through my veins and I saw in my imagination the meeting at Ostend or Boulogne. I must say that Mr. Whitehurst seemed rather taken back. He was not in the least afraid, but he evidently had not expected my ready compliance with his suggestion.

"I am not aware," said he, "that I have given you the option of ending the matter in the way you suggest."

"Pardon me, Mr. Whitehurst, but you certainly said that if the offence had happened in France you would have dispensed with the lawyers. We are both Englishmen, as you reminded me, and I venture to suggest that our nationality should not

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and cannot be a bar to our risking our lives in the protection of our honour. And I have the privilege to remind you, Mr. Whitehurst, that we are both gentlemen. Nay, more, that we are both gentlemen of the Press."

"Certainly, Mr. à Beckett, and in the latter category no doubt the incident of our meeting would have its professional advantages."

"Undoubtedly," I replied, "that was a consideration which occurred to me the moment you suggested satisfaction. Then, Mr. Whitehurst, with your consent, I will place the painful affair in the hands of someone who can act for me."

"As you please, sir."

"And I may take it that the question of bringing an action for libel is, to say the least, in abeyance?"

Mr. Whitehurst considered for a moment and replied—

"Well, of course, if there ceases—through means which I shall be the first to deplore—to be a defendant, I fail to understand how there can be a plaintiff."

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Whitehurst, a thousand thanks."

I was nearly shaking my opponent warmly by the hand, but remembering that we were about to become combatants—possibly to the death—I thought it better to retire with a cheery word in lieu of a heartier salutation.

I hurried to the British Embassy, where many of the officials were my good friends. On the staff

CONFERENCE IN THE BRITISH EMBASSY

of my paper was Freddy Clay, son of the Member for Hull, one of the nicest, cleverest and kindest fellows who ever lived. He had been musical critic in conjunction with Sir Arthur Sullivan for the *Glow-worm*, and he had followed me to my new paper. He was at the time an official at the Treasury. He had nothing to do with the politics of the paper—which, after all, were not of a very alarming character—but the badge of all our tribe, with the exception of myself, was the anonymous. He had a relative also at the British Embassy, and I went to see him. I explained what had happened, and we both had a good laugh.

“Of course you shall be properly represented,” said E.C.K.S. “We will call in Major Byng Hall. You know him, don’t you?”

“Certainly. He used to write articles for *Britannia* on bric-a-brac. You mean the Queen’s Messenger. There can be only one Byng Hall. The nicest and kindest fellow imaginable. Puts up in the Hotel de Bath, in the Rue St. Honoré, because he says it is the only place in Paris that has English carpets.”

“That’s our man,” replied E.C.K.S. “He’s in the Embassy, and I will ask him to look in.”

So our council of war was soon increased by a third party, Major Byng Hall. The kind old gentleman promised to help me to the best of his ability, and I left myself in his hands.

“Look here,” said E.C.K.S. as I was taking my leave, “I don’t think you need worry yourself

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too much. Don't rush off to London to make your will, or anything of that sort."

"Not much to leave," I put in with youthful light-heartedness. "And what it is, if any, will be claimed by my tradesmen."

"Well, don't worry, I think you will receive in a day or two a letter from our friend Whitehurst saying that he has come to the conclusion that it was not your fault, that he knew your father, and you are very young. Then he will ask you to dinner at the Hotel du Helder in the Rue du Helder to meet the Duc de Somebody-or-other, and you will have a very pleasant evening. *Au fond* he is a very good fellow indeed, and on the best of terms with the Embassy."

And so the matter ended. I did dine with Mr. Whitehurst at the Hotel du Helder, Rue du Helder, and had a most charming entertainment, bodily and mental. By the way, this caravanseraï was greatly in favour with English writers. It had the reputation of being patronised by Dickens and George Augustus Sala. When Burnand and I visited Paris we used to put up at it. I believe my first introduction to the place was the dinner of reconciliation which was the substitute for a hostile meeting at either Boulogne or Ostend.

While I was waiting in Paris for developments I seized the opportunity of writing to the Emperor's *chef du Cabinet* offering to write the life of "Sa Majesté." I am afraid that during the whole of my life I have acted rather impulsively,

A LIFE OF NAPOLEON III

and this was an instance of this tendency. I sent the letter, forgot all about it, and returned to London. A week later, when I was having breakfast in my rooms in Palace Chambers, 88 St. James's Street, a footman in a gorgeous livery from the French Embassy insisted upon seeing me. He had been commissioned to deliver into my own hands a letter. When I opened it I found it was a courteous reply commanded by "Sa Majesté," informing me that every facility would be put in my way to carry out my intention. I was to have access to any papers that I required. Unfortunately the war of 1870-71 swept away the Empire and the Emperor, and my life of Napoleon III never was written.

One of my journalist friends was Captain Hamber, Editor at that time of the *Standard*. I also knew Mr. Marwood Tucker, Editor of the *Globe*, who was a nephew of the late Marquis of Salisbury. I called at Shoe Lane and received a commission to do what I could in France as a free-lance. My old friend, Mr. T. W. Madge, was even then connected with the *Globe*, long before he became the moving spirit—I believe the originator—of the *People*. Both Captain Hamber and Mr. Marwood Tucker were exceedingly kind. They thought I could contrive to represent both papers. The idea was that I should go in for tragedy in the *Standard* and, so to speak, reserve "comic relief" for the *Globe*. I was to be "The Special Correspondent" of the first and "The Roving Commissioner"

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of the second. The last title I had adopted when I had written a number of more or less amusing articles for my old paper the *Glow-worm*.

"As you are without any special credentials," said Captain Hamber, "I think you had better send your letters to us addressed to 'Mrs. Harris, Shoe Lane.' If you send to the paper itself you may possibly be put to inconvenience."

The name, of course, was suggested by *Punch's* nickname for the *Morning Herald*, which was more or less identical with the *Standard*. It was a piece of what I may term *Punch* "family fun." The *Standard* was made to say in one of Leech's cartoons, "The 'Erald! 'Erald! I don't believe there is no such paper!" The point was the greater at Bouverie Street than elsewhere because my father, Gilbert Abbott à Becket, was at the very moment writing leaders in the *Morning Herald*.

So it was arranged, and I started for Boulogne in company with my old and valued friend, Mr. J. L. Molloy, who was also on the staff of the *Standard*. I put up at the Hôtel Dervaux, in the Grand Rue, where I found a few Englishmen and a goodly body of Frenchmen. I am sorry to say that England was far from popular with our ex-allies and present fast friends.

The troops at Boulogne were entirely demoralised. I found non-commissioned officers haranguing crowds of privates and explaining how they had been "betrayed," and the only thing to do

A QUARREL AT BOULOGNE

was to surrender. During the year I spent in France and Germany I had a grand object lesson of the results of an invasion. There was misery and degradation in France and desolation in Germany. My friend Molloy is an Irishman and a patriot. I know of no better subject of His Majesty the King. A member of the Bar, a musical composer of the first rank, and the most delightful of companions. We had only one point of difference: he was an Irishman and I was an Englishman. That was all.

There was rather a fire-eater at the Hôtel Dervaux who was inclined to take exception to the position of my old and valued friend, Sir William Howard Russell, the *doyen* of war correspondents. At the time the Doctor was at the headquarters of the German Army, on the staff, I believe, of the young Crown Prince, subsequently the Emperor Frederick of Germany. I am sorry to say that all my life I have suffered from a proneness to "chaff" my elders and betters. I fear I said something that displeased the fire-eater, who had been talking in a disparaging fashion of Russell. He wanted to call me out, but my friend "Jimmy" smoothed things over by suggesting (I believe) that I was only fifteen years old, but a fine lad for my age! At any rate, I lived to shake hands with the fire-eater and to drink a *vin d'honneur* with him to the glory of the French. I remembered the victories of the Crimea—the Alma, Inkermann, and Sebastopol—

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which had been won by the English and French. My friend Molloy went back a while earlier when French and Irish shared the dangers of the field at Fontenoy. We were all very enthusiastic, and the next morning I had rather a headache.

Of late years there has been so much military correspondence that I refrain from giving my experience *in extenso*. But there was one incident which certainly amused me a great deal at the time, and still causes me to smile when it reappears in my mind's eye as a recollection. Molloy and I were at Amiens a day or two before its fall. The Germans had got to Abbeville and their outposts were in touch with the city of the far-famed Cathedral. The same spirit of hopeless insubordination was as rife at Amiens as in Boulogne. The officers were taking things very quietly in the cafés, and the bulk of the Army were encamped outside the town. There was a good deal of mud about, which was trying to patent-leather boots.

My friend and I had reached a battery outside the city which had been shelling some Germans in the distance. My friend, whose French was better than mine, asked one of the soldiers what they were up to. Nothing could have been more courteous and conciliatory than the tone in which Mr. Molloy put his very reasonable enquiry.

But unfortunately the soldier—a Moblot—was evidently not accustomed to polite society. He

ARRESTED AT AMIENS

took the question in bad part, and in a jiffy—a short period of time—we were arrested.

If there is one thing in my life of which I have been proud it has been my commission as a Captain in the Militia. Now was my opportunity to show Mr. Molloy who I really was. I proudly produced my commission and demanded as an *Officier Anglais* an audience with the Commanding Officer of the detachment. The Sergeant-major of my battalion, 7th Rifle Brigade (late 1st Royal Tower Hamlets King's Own Light Infantry), used to say that I had a very good word of command. The good word of command, so effective in peaceful Dalston (where my regiment trained), had its due effect outside besieged Amiens. I was led up to a Lieutenant to whom I presented my credentials. He read them and then consulted with a shaggy, red-headed non-com., who evidently wanted to have the shooting of us.

“*Mais c'est ridicule, Monsieur,*” I argued in what Thackeray's Jeames would have called excellent French. “*C'est tout a fait ridicule. Je suis officier Anglais et si vous me fusile et mon ami—aussi Anglais—j'ecriverai au redacteur-en-chef du Times. Le bureau est a Printing House Square, vous savez.*”

The Lieutenant with an abrupt salute, which I returned with great courtesy, ordered us off under arrest. My friend and I were surrounded with troops. Close to me was the red-headed non-com. who wanted to shoot us. I asked him, as we had

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apparently the entire regiment with us, why had he neglected to order the band ?

“ *Il sera si beau d'avoir la musique.* ”

“ For heaven's sake, keep quiet, you idiot,” murmured Mr. Molloy. “ That's the sort of thing that gets one bayoneted.”

Then I informed the ill-conditioned non-com. that he “ had reason for arresting us, as my friend was indeed Bismarck without his moustache.” Fresh and angry remonstrances from Jimmy, who thought me a bigger fool than ever. But the men of the escort grinned merrily and took all I said in good part.

We marched through a mile of clay to the headquarters of the column. Of course the march did not improve the appearance of patent-leather boots. We were asked into a tent, where we found a white-headed old general officer, a Colonel who apparently had risen from the ranks, and two youngsters in *pince-nez*, who seemingly had come from the *École Polytechnique*. The Sergeant introduced us and, so to speak, acted as prosecutor.

When the general officer asked for an explanation, my friend Molloy was most conciliatory. He was an Irishman.

“ The same as an Englishman,” I put in, giving my friend the protection of the Union Jack.

Had we our passports ?

Certainly we had, and we produced them.

The officer I had put down in my mind as risen from the ranks then asked Jimmy if he could

A TRYING SITUATION

speak German. My friend was on his guard. It was well known that if you did speak German the accomplishment went a long way to prove that you were a Prussian spy.

Molloy was horrified at the idea that he could possibly speak German. No, a thousand times no.

"And you?" Thus the self-made officer to me very roughly.

Oh, certainly, I spoke German. Molloy was surprised. But I only spoke one word, "eisenbahn." "Eisenbahn" I explained, was a house for the reception of carriages containing passengers. There were platforms, and booking-offices and locomotives. In England "eisenbahn" meant a railway station. Oh, yes, I knew "eisenbahn" quite well. I need scarcely say that all this was mere chaff. The General was puzzled, the youngsters from the *École Polytechnique* amused, the self-made officer very angry.

"You have an accent, you," exclaimed the last, glaring at me. "You have a strong accent."

The amiable warrior intended to imply that I had a strong German accent, and consequently was open to the gravest suspicion. I threw up my hands in horror at the accusation. To suggest that I had an accent! I "mon-doo-ed" with great indignation. It was not that I was in danger, but that I was annoyed at the indignity shown to my command over the French language.

"*Ah, mong doo, mong doo!*" I said. "*Jer parly Francey comme ung parfait Parrissien!*"

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

This was too much for the *pince nez* detachment and they burst into a hearty laugh. The old General smiled and the self-made Colonel or Major or whatever he was had to subside. – There was a short consultation and the General addressed us :

“ We have come to the conclusion that you are English.”

“ Irish,” softly suggested Jimmy Molloy.

“ Quite the same thing,” I put in.

“ You are both British subjects ; we do not think you are doing any harm.”

This was satisfactory so far as it went.

“ But we may point out to you that this is not the time to be in France unless you are here to help us. You might have been shot off-hand or thrown into prison for an indefinite period.”

Again we bowed.

“ So we have decided to march you back to the railway station and send you back to whence you came.”

So Molloy and I were once again marched along under a strong military escort, landed at the railway station, and sent back to Boulogne. It was fortunate for us that we were, because a day or two later the city fell into the hands of the Prussians. It was quite on the cards that we might have been disposed of to prevent our giving information. But supposing we had been allowed to remain alive we should have had to get back to England *viâ* Luxembourg. We considered this on our return to the French watering-place. I

THE EDITOR OF A MEDICAL MAGAZINE

had gradually realised the extreme danger we had passed through, and when I knew we were safe and sound I completely broke down. I do not mind admitting that I wept like a child. I suppose it was the reaction.

It is not always safe to rely upon the want of knowledge of the English language that is credited to foreigners generally by Britishers. Years ago I visited with the editor of a medical magazine that terrible island close to Venice where so many demented creatures are incarcerated.

"We shall have no difficulty in getting over it," said my friend. "I know the old chap at the head of it, and he respects me on the ground of my editorship. As luck will have it, I have an article in the current number of the journal. I will show it to him, and that will serve as an introduction. He doesn't speak a word of English, which is rather fortunate, for I am somewha down upon the institution for using unreasonably mechanical restraint with the patients."

So we took a gondola and were soon at our destination. The "old chap" in charge received us affably. We spoke in French, which neither he nor we understood too well, but got on "to admiration." Then my friend introduced his journal, which the "old chap" glanced at. Then the director told us we could go where we pleased and vanished. I never had a worse time in my life. My friend himself was a little less at ease

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than usual, although accustomed to the manners and customs of lunatics. We found ourselves amongst homicidal cases of all descriptions. I met angry Napoleons the Great, quarrelsome Neros and other distinguished and demented celebrities of the past. One gentleman seemingly was under the impression that he was a man-eating tiger, another that he had no body, and would walk through us, as he was a shadow. There were now and again attendants clothed in religious habits—who saved us from actual violence. My friend, however, was calm enough, although I must admit that I was in what we used to call at school “a blue funk.” At length we came back to the entrance, to my infinite relief, where we found the “old chap” waiting for us. He was very polite; trusted we had seen everything and had been put to no inconvenience. My friend thanked him, but without cordiality.

“I thought you should see everything at first hand,” said the ‘old chap,’ speaking in French, “so that you might judge for yourself. Here is your journal. Your article upon this institution is most interesting, if rather severe.”

“You have been able to understand it?” exclaimed my friend.

“Oh, yes, perfectly. Since we last met I have learned English!”

On Christmas Day, 1870, I was in Cologne. I had parted company with my friend Molloy, and was on my own. Warned by the danger I had

CHRISTMAS DAY IN COLOGNE IN 1870

passed through at Amiens, I called upon the Secretary of the Red Cross Society in London, and asked if I could be of any service to that excellent institution. I was told that no volunteers were required, that the Red Cross was in the able hands of an officer in the Rifle Brigade and my assistance was unnecessary. In fact, I was politely but determinedly bowed out. I need scarcely say I was not best pleased at the treatment, and when I got behind the war and amongst the French prisoners and found that there had been mismanagement somewhere, I did not fail to inform the public of my discovery.

It was a bitterly cold night that Christmas Day, 1870. I spent the eve in what was known as the English Ambulance, because the funds had been collected from Germans in Great Britain. The festival was kept in the customary Teutonic fashion. There were a number of Christmas trees in the wards, and the patients—some of them dying—received gifts from the branches. As I went to midnight mass at the Cathedral I heard the sound of musketry. I learned later on that some of the prisoners had attempted to escape and had been fired upon by the soldiers. I can scarcely blame the German authorities. There were an enormous number of prisoners at Cologne for whom no provision had been made. It had been expected that at any rate at first the French would have been successful. But after Saarbruck all had gone wrong with the

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Emperor Napoleon. He had been hopelessly beaten at Sedan and his army was on German territory as prisoners. In Cologne alone there were some six hundred patients down with all sorts of diseases. The most prevalent was black smallpox. And to look after these poor creatures there were only a couple of German Army doctors. At the English Ambulance I met a young medical student who cottoned to me as a fellow-countryman.

"They are rather conservative in their ideas," he explained, "but I am getting a lot of surgical experience. When no one is looking I take a little bit of bone out here and another little bit there. First-rate exercise and nearly always successful."

"But how about your qualifications?" I asked.

"Oh, they haven't bothered themselves much about that. You see doctors are at a premium just now and every little helps. I am much obliged to you for all your information."

At Cologne the French officers were fairly comfortable. They belonged chiefly to the Imperial Guard and could pay their way. They had their mothers and sisters staying with them and were allowed to live, if they wished, in the best hotels. But when I got to Coblenz and Manheim matters were very different. I found the rank and file earning a few coppers by helping the townspeople to do the work left undone through the enforced absence of the peasants at the front. Nothing could have been more desolate than

THE SAD CASE OF THE FRENCH OFFICERS

Germany depleted of her citizens in the days of the Great War. But the plight of the French officers was terrible. The Empire had fallen and there was as yet no government risen to take its place. At least that was the theory of Bismarck. The consequences were terrible to the poor French officers. They were on the brink of starvation. I put their case very strongly in the columns of the *Standard* and a fund was raised for their relief.

Since 1874 I have kept a diary and can verify my facts by referring to its pages. But the events of 1870 I have only in my memory, and I could scarcely credit that such a condition of affairs could have existed. I thought I must have been mistaken and that the poor French officers were not in threadbare summer coats in the midst of the severest winter I remember, and were not starving. However, I found on reading the "Life of the late Duke of Cambridge"—a most excellent work, doing justice to His Royal Highness—that the misery I had depicted was not imaginary. It is pleasant for me to remember, some thirty years later, that it was my pen which did good service to the cause of humanity. As it happened, I was the only English correspondent at the "back of the war." It was not a post altogether without danger. I used to go amongst the sick without fear of infection. I had got it into my head that vinegar was an excellent disinfectant. So I drenched my ulster great-coat with the pungent liquid. I believe, had the time been in the days of

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peace, when commercial travellers were more on the road than Special Correspondents, I should have gained the reputation of "travelling in pickles."

But what depressed me more than anything was my absolute solitude. I scarcely ever met a fellow-countryman, and the Germans hated us. I visited Strasbourg after the bombardment and found it a mass of ruins. The bedrooms in the hotel at which I stayed were monopolised by the military. There was a mess in the *salle à manger*. The proprietor was a Frenchman who spoke English. Every now and again, after displaying extreme politeness to "the Conquerors," he would approach me and tell me that his "guests" were "pigs." The inhabitants of Strasbourg were living in the cellars. They had gone into these subterranean haunts during the siege to escape from the shells. In one of these cellars I had my hair cut by a barber whom I had known in Piccadilly. He was loud in his laments at the fate of his much loved city. The most cheerful individual in the place was the Suisse at the Cathedral. He told me that the sacred fane had suffered very little damage from the bombardment. A few stones had been knocked down and a little glass shattered, but that was all.

"But," said I, "surely that magnificent window of the thirteenth century has fared badly? It seems to me that the Cathedral is absolutely ruined."

BACK FROM THE WAR

“Not at all, Monsieur. The clock with its moving figures, including the crowing cock, is quite safe. Would you like me to show it to you? The fee is only a franc and the sight is really worth the money.”

On the 11th of January, 1871, I returned to London and have found a memo. of the event in an old note-book. “Have lost all my luggage. Came from Cologne *viâ* Maestrick and my luggage was sent to Verviers. Had a terrible but unsuccessful row to get it back. No go. The Scheldt being frozen over, left Antwerp to reach London *viâ* Ostend. Started at ten minutes to 5 and reached London at 8.30. Took a hot bath, and after breakfasting at the Thatched House Club, posted off to see ‘Coco’ [my brother Albert] at the War Office. Everybody seemed glad to see me. Letter of mine in the *Times* yesterday, so they knew I was in the land of the living. Seems quite the land of the living after spending such a lot of my time in the countries of the dead.”

I must confess that in time of war neither French nor German was very sympathetic. My eldest brother Gilbert lived—as an invalid—at Dinan in Brittany during the whole of the struggle. He found the French unbearable. He was very fond of them, but when the war began to go against them they seemed to become infuriated with all foreigners. Two silly young fellows from either Oxford or Cambridge before leaving Dinan

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threw a bottle of ink at the statue of Duguesclin in the centre of the Grand Place. The crime was brought home to them and they were arrested. An infuriated mob demanded their blood, and they had to be protected in the fortress of Anne of Brittany. When they were tried it was suggested that they insulted the hero in revenge for the victories Duguesclin had won against the English centuries before. Although it was believed that they were emissaries of "Sir Gladstone" they were ultimately—thanks to the energy of the British Consul—released.

"I am sorry, gentlemen," said the Mayor, "that you cannot forgive Duguesclin."

"Yes, I can," murmured one undergraduate to the other in a low tone, "for this is the first time I have heard of the beggar."

I was delighted to get back to England. Thirty or forty years ago the life of a special correspondent was not a very happy one. During my wanderings in Germany I had the field entirely to myself. This was naturally a great deprivation. Still the situation had its compensations and advantages. All the special correspondents I have met have been most excellent fellows. Still, it is just possible that sometimes even the best of friends may fall out. At least so I have been told by those who know more about modern war correspondence than I do.

CHAPTER IX

THE END OF A LONG REIGN

The Announcement of Queen Victoria's Death in Gray's Inn—A Contrast in the Pension Room—The Germ of "Empire Day"—Proposal for its Celebration—The Proceedings of the Victoria Day Committee—Interview with Mr. Beerbohm Tree—The Queen's 80th Birthday Committee—The Work of Four—The English Gentlemen of the U.S.A.—A Day of Successes—At Osborne—"The Queen is dead—Long live the King!"

"GENTLEMEN! Members of Gray's Inn! Barristers and Students!"

There was a silence. The Treasurer had risen from his seat. There had been no three strokes of the mallet calling for attention to the Latin Grace from the black-robed Reader or Preacher. And yet there was little surprise. The long rows of members of the Bar in their silk gowns and the students in their gowns of stuff looked at the clock ticking under the musicians' gallery. The hands were pointing to twenty minutes to seven. The silence was broken by the tolling of the Chapel bell.

"The Queen is dead—Long live the King!"

It was in these words that I heard the news of the death of Queen Victoria. I was dining at the Benchers' Table ("asked up" to complete a mess from the Barristers below) and the Treasurer had been whispering to the Butler. It had been wired from Osborne that Her Majesty had just expired and strictly according to precedent the Head of our Honourable Society had made the sad

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announcement in the form sanctioned by the custom of centuries. "The Queen was dead—Long live the King." There was a hush in the conversation in Hall. The expected had happened, still there was the effect of shock. Elderly and generally loquacious members of the Junior Bar and boyish and usually light-hearted students spoke in undertones. So quiet had we grown that the bell set a-tolling—again strictly according to precedent—could be distinctly heard without. "The Queen was dead—Long live the King." In the centre of the Hall was the picture of another sovereign—our Toast on Grand Nights—and we thought that one greater, nobler, and justly more beloved than "Good Queen Bess" had left us. Then came the regulation three knocks. The Latin Grace was said. The Benchers bowed to the Bar, who returned the salutation. The Honourable Masters filed out and casting away their gowns entered the Pension Room sacred to chat and dessert—the port on wheels went round and glasses were filled.

"Mr. Vice," said the Treasurer, "I give you the King."

"The King! God bless him!" and we resumed our seats.

Then there was some hesitation. The second toast, "The Prince and Princess of Wales and the rest of the Royal family," was scarcely right under the circumstances. What should it be? The Treasurer was equal to the occasion.

IN THE PENSION ROOM OF GRAY'S INN

“ Mr. Vice, Gentlemen, I give you the Queen and the rest of the Royal Family.”

And the toast was honoured. Then the Treasurer told us that he had received the intelligence of the Queen's death from Osborne while he was seated in Hall. Within half-an-hour we were drinking the King's health. No doubt sharing with our learned brothers of Lincoln's Inn and the Inner and Middle Temples the distinction of being the first to hail officially our present gracious Sovereign. As I drank the toast I was reminded that it was in that very room I had met many of the members of the Royal Family in 1887. The occasion was the performance of “ The Maske of Flowers ” in honour of our good Queen's Jubilee when I, as Master of the Revels of Gray's Inn, had the honour of being introduced by our then Treasurer, the Duke of Connaught, to the Duchess of Connaught, the Duchess of Teck, the Duchess of Edinburgh and the Princess May. What a difference. When I was speaking to their Royal Highnesses everyone was in the highest spirits. The Maske had been a great success and everyone was full of smiles and congratulations. It was summer time, and the Pension Room was decorated profusely with roses. And now what a change ! Winter, serious faces, the sound of a tolling bell. The great and loved Queen we had honoured according to the precedent of Gray's Inn—for Maskes were the official mode of showing rejoicing—was dead. Long live the King !

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As it happened I had visited Sir Arthur Bigge at Windsor on the 3rd of the previous December to consult him about a matter that I believed would be of interest to Her Majesty. At that time the Queen was believed to be in excellent health and Sir Arthur—always the pink of courtesy—explained to me that the affair was one that in the first instance should be dealt with by the Home Secretary. So I went my way and, after a consultation with those who shared my views, obtained an interview with the late Mr. Ritchie, when our project was laid before him. The deputation of two consisted of a well-known peer and myself. The Home Secretary was exceedingly kind and promised that the matter in which we were interested should have his “sympathetic consideration.”

The very next day the serious condition of Her Majesty's health was announced in the paper, and practically until the time of her death of course it was difficult, if not impossible, to take her commands. Then came the anxious time of waiting, to be followed on the ever-memorable 22nd of January, 1901, by the death of the Queen. Victoria the Good—God bless her.

In 1900 I had had the honour of being elected President of the Institute of Journalists and in that position, to a large extent, was the official representative of British Journalism. Very shortly after the death of the Queen I had to act in my semi-official capacity. The times were out of

ATTENDANCE AT COURT FUNCTIONS

joint on the Continent, and there was always a danger of outrages occurring at State functions. Now that things are changed for the better, it is not improper to say that there was a certain slackness amongst the authorities. For instance, anyone who had been presented at Court was able at a moment's notice to attend a *levée*. Thus it was not impossible that a person who had not been presented could gain admittance to the Palace on such occasions. A bold adventurer had only to assume a uniform, write his name on two cards and obtain admission to the Presence. The only thing needed was to give the card upon which was written his assumed name at the entrance of the first staircase, reserving the second card for the Lord Chamberlain in the Throne Room. Of course a list of those entitled to attend *levées* is kept in the Lord Chamberlain's office and I believe that the first card was compared with that list before the visitor could get to the spot where the second card had to be delivered. But if the man was an impostor from the first, of course this inspection was of no use in detecting the fraud. It has always been a wonder to me how a hall porter of a large club containing some thousands of members can spot a non-member. So far as one can hear, a club is very seldom used by an unintroducted outsider. Still, it was quite conceivable that an impostor might pass the examiners at St. James' or Buckingham Palaces without being challenged.

Nowadays I am glad to say the system has

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been revolutionised. Anyone desirous of attending a *levée* or a Court must have a special invitation, and the greatest care is taken that only proper people are admitted. However, the Drawing Rooms and *levées* were under the supervision of the Lord Chamberlain and the gentlemen belonging to his department. But before my year of office as President of the Institute of Journalists expired there were certain State functions which had to be attended by the Press and here, perhaps, I was able to be of some slight service to those who were responsible for the safety of the most exalted personages in the Realm.

I put myself in communication with the Commissioner of Police and Norroy King at Arms, then acting for the late Sir Albert Woods, then Garter King at Arms. An enquiry which had taken place under my chairmanship had proved that the members of the Institute of Journalists were all of them, without an exception, gentlemen of the Press of unblemished professional character. Lists of the members of the Institute were supplied to the then Commissioner of Police and to Norroy King at Arms. The latter was much obliged because he said it was most difficult to discriminate in the distribution of tickets of admission to members of the Press. The Funeral of the late Sovereign, and afterwards the opening in State of the First Session of Parliament by King Edward the Seventh were occasions in point. Norroy had a certain number of tickets at his disposal for

GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS

distribution and he had no guarantee that those who asked for them were right and proper people to receive them. Armed with the list I was able to give him of the members of the Institute of Journalists, he had at least a record of those who were *sans reproche* from a professional point of view. I have the honour of being an Honorary Member of the Foreign Press Association, and I have reason to believe that my colleagues are of the highest respectability, but the fact that any of them was a member of the Institute was an additional reason for a ticket from Norroy. The Commissioner of Police, although expressing his thanks for our list, put his chief reliance upon the personal guarantee of the various London editors and the Secretaries of the Foreign Embassies. But, even in his case, I fancy from what he said to me that he was glad to have as a stand-by the information of the members' list of the Institute.

As the memory of Queen Victoria is tenderly cherished, it may not be out of place to give some particulars in this book of reminiscences of one of the last functions held in her honour—the story extends back to not later than 1899. Early in that memorable year I thought out a scheme which I considered might lead to the consolidation of the British Empire. It was before the War in South Africa, which did so much to bring the Colonies into line with the Mother Country. At the moment my energetic friend, Mr. Henniker Heaton, always on the alert to extend the benefits of a

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

universal penny postage, had increased the area of his gigantic scheme to an appreciable extent. It was possible to forward a half-ounce epistle at the rate of a couple of halfpence to India and several of the Colonies. This boon suggested to me the idea of sending some of our principal papers beyond the seas, a message of goodwill and an invitation to start Empire Day. On the 2nd January I find the matter referred to in my diary—I have kept one day by day for more than thirty years—as follows:—"Thought out scheme of Empire Day, 23rd April—Religious—Colonial." The date I had selected was the festival sacred to St. George of Merrie England and had the advantage of being the birthday and (traditional) deathday of William Shakespeare. I found that in 1899 St. George's Day fell on a Sunday and consequently no Act of Parliament would be required to command a universal holiday. The holiday was already made, so it seemed to me that it would only require to take the subject up by having special prayers and the thing was done.

I worked at the notion all through the month and on the 25th saw Colonel Taylor, one of the most charming of Americans and then President of the American Society in London. I described my scheme and asked him to join in the proposed demonstration. I pointed out that our cousins of the United States belonged to the senior Crown Colony. The Colonel was very sympathetic. He was pleased at the idea but evidently did not quite

SIR W. BESANT SUPPORTS EMPIRE DAY

see where America "came in" with the British Empire. However, he did not say "no," and told me that I might look in upon him later on. This interview broke the ice for a further advance when I ultimately persuaded the gallant Colonel (he commanded a force of horse on the Confederate side in the Great American Civil War) to take part in the celebration of the Queen's eightieth birthday on the 24th of May.

About this time I received a letter from my friend, the late Sir Walter Besant, telling me that he had seen my letter concerning Empire Day, and he was entirely with me. He said that years before he had considered the advisability of holding an Empire Day on the 24th of May, the Queen's birthday, and that the suggestion had been well received. He was very glad that I had broached the idea and would do all in his power to back me up. He had allowed the scheme to drop because there was not much enthusiasm, and he fancied he had had an attack of gout. Moreover, he thought Victoria Day would be a better title than Empire Day, and why should we not keep the festival on the Queen's birthday, the 24th of May, instead of the 23rd of April? I cordially responded to the suggestion. To be frank, I found that St. George's Day had fallen rather flat. I had approached the Bishops, and they had thrown cold water upon my proposal. The general cry was that they disapproved of new prayers. I had suggested to the Archbishop of Canterbury the

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

advisability of His Grace composing something appropriate, but His Grace did not see it. He thought the idea excellent, but the clergy had quite enough to do to look after their flocks without establishing on a firm basis the British Empire. Quite sympathetic but firmly obstructive. I wrote to several leading Nonconformists and only one sent me a favourable reply—no less a person than Dr. Clifford. From Dr. Clifford I got the promise of support and sentiments worthy of the best of Englishmen. Then I saw my old friend, Canon Teignmouth Shore, who also was pleased with the idea. I next looked up another very old friend, Mr. (now Sir) Arthur Trendell, who introduced me to Sir William Robinson, who had just returned as a G.C.M.G. from service in the Colonies. It now occurred to me that it was time to call a meeting of my friends to consider the next move, and I subjoin a report of our first gathering.

Minutes of a meeting held at 33 Eccleston Square, S.W., on the 21st of February, 1899.

Present : Sir William Robinson,
Sir Walter Besant,
Mr. A. J. R. Trendell,
Mr. Arthur W. à Beckett.

Mr. Arthur W. à Beckett explained the purpose of the meeting, which was to obtain the universal observance of the Sovereign's birthday throughout the British Empire in recognition of the sentiment of loyalty and brotherhood prevailing in Her Majesty's dominions.

After some discussion the following resolutions were proposed, seconded and carried unanimously.

CIRCULAR PROPOSING EMPIRE DAY

1. That the Victoria Day Celebration Committee be formed and is hereby formed for the observance of the Sovereign's birthday throughout the British Empire in recognition of the sentiment of loyalty and brotherhood prevailing in Her Majesty's dominions.

2. That the Victoria Day Celebration Committee shall consist of a general committee and an executive committee and that Sir William Robinson, Sir Walter Besant, Mr. A. J. R. Trendell and Mr. Arthur W. à Beckett be members of both these committees with power to add to their numbers.

3. That Sir Walter Besant be and is hereby elected to be Treasurer, and Mr. Arthur W. à Beckett be and is hereby elected Honorary Secretary of the Victoria Day Celebration Committee.

The Hon. Secretary reported that he had seen Mr. Beerbohm Tree, proprietor of Her Majesty's Theatre, and that that gentleman had consented to give a gratuitous morning performance in honour of Her Majesty's birthday. The audience to be composed of children selected by the Committee now formed and then in contemplation.

The Committee expressed satisfaction at Mr. Beerbohm Tree's kind acquiescence in Mr. à Beckett's suggestion.

The question of offices for the Committee was discussed, and it was suggested by Sir William Robinson that, if possible, rooms should be secured in the Colonial Institute, Northumberland Avenue; pending any such arrangement the invitation of the Hon. Secretary to use 33 Eccleston Square was accepted.

Various preliminary suggestions were made for the observance of Victoria Day, including an Imperial Dinner with a conversazione to follow, a gathering of Volunteers, a holiday granted by large employers of labour to their workpeople, and municipal festivities in town and country.

At the request of the Committee, Sir Walter Besant and Mr. Arthur W. à Beckett undertook to lay before the Committee at their next meeting a circular suitable for distribution founded upon the Hon. Secretary's letter to the *Morning Post* of January 23rd, 1899.

Sir William Robinson, at the request of the Committee, undertook to make enquiry if opportunity offered as to the

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possibility of obtaining suitable accommodation at the Colonial Institute and to report.

The Hon. Secretary mentioned the names of three gentlemen willing to give their services as Assistant Hon. Secretaries.

After some further discussion of details the Committee adjourned to Wednesday, March 1st, at 11 o'clock. The meeting to be held at 33 Eccleston Square, S.W.

(Signed) WILLIAM ROBINSON.

It will be seen from the above Minutes that I had been at work in the interests of Empire Day before our first meeting. I have said that I had circularised the Indian and Colonial papers. Just before our meeting I wrote to the *Morning Post*, a journal I was quite sure would be in perfect sympathy with my aspirations. Not only this, but I had visited my accomplished friend, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, and found him most kind.

"You see," I said, "it would be an admirable notion to celebrate the Queen's birthday in Her Majesty's Theatre. In fact, the Queen's birthday could scarcely be adequately celebrated without a free performance in Her Majesty's Theatre."

My friend was quite in accord with me. It did seem to us both that the celebration would be more complete if such a function were held.

"A morning performance," I continued, with an eye to the imperial dinner I knew was in contemplation to follow. "A morning performance would be certainly better than an evening one for our special audience."

"What would be the special audience?" asked my friend Mr. Tree.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. BEERBOHM TREE

“ Well,” I said, after some consideration, “ what do you say to our deserving poor ? ”

I fancy Mr. Beerbohm Tree was inclined to suggest “ further and better particulars,” so I anticipated him.

“ I mean the deserving inmates of our unions, our workhouses, our hospitals.”

“ I see,” said Mr. Beerbohm Tree ; “ but if we had an evening performance after the morning performance to our deserving poor, there might be some practical objections,” and he gave a satisfactory explanation in support of his contention.

“ Quite so,” I replied. “ Well, then, let us abandon the deserving poor and fall back upon the children of the State.”

“ The children of the State. Certainly,” cried Mr. Beerbohm Tree in a tone of conviction. “ But now can you tell me—who are the children of the State ? ”

“ Why, the Duke of York’s School ! ” I replied promptly.

“ Certainly, the Duke of York’s School and——? ”

“ And the Naval School at Greenwich, the Guards’ School at Westminster, and so forth and so forth.”

“ Yes, I see,” said the Manager of Her Majesty’s Theatre.

I continued.

“ Any school, in fact, that could wear officially a uniform. If possible we ought to ‘ work in ’

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

Scotland and Ireland. Pity we couldn't have children of the State from the Colonies. But it wouldn't be practicable ? ”

“ No, I don't think it would be practicable,” acquiesced Mr. Beerbohm Tree. “ And the performance ? ”

I felt inclined to say “ Oranges and Buns,” but I thought that such an answer would be considered (very properly) too frivolous, so I murmured : “ Hamlet or Macbeth, or something of that sort.”

“ A little too heavy I think,” returned Mr. Tree with a smile.

Then rather a happy thought struck me.

“ Do you think it would be possible to let the children wish Her Majesty many happy returns of the day and sing the National Anthem ? ”

“ I think it might be managed.”

“ Yes, through the telephone,” I suggested.

And this was subsequently actually arranged. The children of the State sang the National Anthem and certain picked juvenile bandsmen of the Duke of York's School at the beat of the baton saluted Her Most Gracious Majesty with the customary birthday greeting. But more of this when I come to the actual celebration. So it was tentatively arranged that Mr. Beerbohm Tree would be ready to lend his valuable services to the celebration of the Queen's eightieth birthday, as I reported at our first meeting in my character of Hon. Secretary.

Our second meeting was duly held at 33

THE VICTORIA DAY CIRCULAR

Eccleston Square and Sir William Robinson, Sir Walter Besant and I were present. Besant and I submitted our circular, and it was ordered to be printed. I give it herewith :—

VICTORIA DAY.

The Victoria Day Celebration Committee has been formed with the view to promoting the universal observance of the Queen's Birthday throughout the British Empire in recognition of the sentiment of patriotic loyalty prevailing in Her Majesty's dominions.

It is felt that as the duration and unclouded prosperity of Her Majesty's reign has known no parallel in the world's history it would be proper to follow the precedent of Elizabeth Day, an anniversary observed from the beginning of the seventeenth century until at least the middle of the eighteenth. This object could be attained by the universal recognition by Her Majesty's subjects of Victoria Day on the date of her nativity.

The 24th of May, 1899, as the eightieth birthday of the Queen seems particularly appropriate for the inauguration of Victoria Day. This is not a new suggestion. Already the Queen's birthday is kept as a National Festival in India, Canada, Australia and the Colonies generally. It is in the United Kingdom alone that the Queen's Birthday receives no greater recognition than that afforded by the closing of the Government offices and a perfunctory naval and military demonstration. It is the object of the Victoria Day Celebration Committee to bring the United Kingdom into line with the Colonies and other parts of Her Majesty's dominions.

It therefore would appear that the honour paid to the name of the Sovereign in the more recently acquired parts of the Empire has in fact actually outstripped the recognition yielded by the Mother Country herself. It seems marvellous when consideration is given to the expansion of Empire and the growth of the race during the period glorified by the reign of Her Majesty.

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The Victoria Day Celebration Committee will be composed of the most representative persons in an Empire comprising more than a fifth of the population of the civilized world. Statesmen, Divines, Warriors, Jurists, representatives of Literature, Science and Art, and prominent workers in the national progress will be invited to join its ranks. That the machinery may not be of unwieldy proportions the chief labour of organisation will be entrusted to a small Executive Committee with the power of appeal to the main body when advice or more material assistance seems desirable.

Already several valuable suggestions and promises of support have reached the existing Committee auguring that the scheme which they have at heart may be without difficulty carried to a successful issue.

To conclude, the members of the Victoria Day Celebration Committee propose not to relax their efforts until Victoria Day has become the rallying date of the British Brotherhood bound together in bonds of loyalty and love to Queen and Mother Country and the Commemoration Day of that world-esteemed Sovereign, Victoria.

WILLIAM ROBINSON, *Chairman.*

WALTER BESANT, *Hon. Treasurer.*

ARTHUR W. À BECKETT, *Hon. Secretary.*

It was at this point that our Chairman thought it would be advisable to do nothing further in the matter of the Victoria Day Celebration until the circular had been submitted to an Illustrious Personage, whose views thereon would be of immense importance to us in guiding our future action. In the result we obtained the full approval of the Illustrious Personage to whom I have had the honour to refer to celebrate the Queen's

THE QUEEN'S 80TH BIRTHDAY COMMITTEE

eightieth birthday. It was considered that the effort should be spontaneous, and it was suggested that the actual birthday of the Queen should be honoured and not the changeable date officially recognised. For the purpose of giving special significance to the occasion we changed our name (by resolution) from the Victoria Day Celebration Committee to the Queen's Eightieth Birthday Committee. It was the intention at the time that later on the old title should be resumed. But since then the movement started did not require a Committee to give it the necessary impetus. The idea has taken root and the British Empire is established. The name of Victoria illustrious and honoured requires no further glory.

Moreover, after we had composed our circular we were not quite sure that Elizabeth Day was a precedent that could be quoted with absolute whole-hearted approval. My friend Besant discovered that Elizabeth Day fell rather into disgrace at the end of the eighteenth century, being used by Lord George Gordon during the "No Popery Riots." As I belong to the old creed of Christians who regard "the Bishop of Rome" with peculiar devotion, I was easily convinced by my colleagues that Empire Day was better than Victoria Day. So it came to pass that Empire Day became the title of the official holiday we were attempting to establish.

At the same meeting of the Committee at which the object of our body was definitely

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defined I was authorised to issue the following circular:—

THE QUEEN'S EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY COMMITTEE.

Chairman of Executive—

SIR WILLIAM ROBINSON, G.C.M.G.

Hon. Treasurer—

SIR WALTER BESANT.

Hon. Secretary—

ARTHUR W. A BECKETT, ESQ.

It is proposed to commemorate the Eightieth Birthday of Her Majesty the Queen by a Public Dinner to be held at the Hotel Cecil on the 24th of May.

In order to give the occasion as representative a character as possible the Queen's Eightieth Birthday Committee desire to increase their number so as to include subjects of Her Majesty honoured in various branches of intellectual achievement.

I am instructed to convey to you the invitation of the Committee to join their body as one of the representatives they have selected. There will be a preliminary meeting of the General Committee early in April.

I am,

Yours very faithfully,

ARTHUR W. A BECKETT,

*Hon. Sec. Queen's Eightieth Birthday
Committee.*

According to the Minute Book, "It was decided to dispatch the above circular as a preliminary proceeding to a number of gentlemen personally known to the members of the Committee, and then to extend the invitation to a circle including prominent representatives of various branches of

GROWTH OF CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

intellectual achievement." The phrase "intellectual achievement" was the invention of my friend Besant. The meeting after further discussion, in which various plans for celebrating Her Majesty's Eightieth Birthday were considered, adjourned to the 10th of April, 1899, at 4.30 p.m. It was arranged, as we had no idea what our numbers would be by that date, that the meeting should be held at 33 Eccleston Square to report progress.

On March 27th we had practically only four members on the Executive Committee, and no one save our four selves on the General Committee. But we had an excellent object in view and were aware that the object was not distasteful in the most exalted quarters. The result of our appeal was instantaneous. Within the fortnight passing between the two meetings we received nothing but acceptances. I was able to report that in all cases the project was received with enthusiasm. It was decided that the result warranted the Committee confirming a provisional agreement to secure the large hall at the Hotel Cecil and I (as Hon. Secretary) was authorised to take the necessary steps to carry this decision into effect. Our numbers had grown to such an extent that 33 Eccleston Square had to be discarded for premises of a more commodious character.

According to the minutes it was decided that a room should be secured at 20 Hanover Square, and that the next meeting should be held there on

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April the 17th at 4 o'clock. It was still rather an anxious time as there was a mass of details to be settled. But of one thing we were sure. An enthusiastic body of men, "honoured in various branches of intellectual achievement," were prepared to do their utmost to show their respect for Queen Victoria. And encouraged with this assurance we did not fear the future.

The next meeting of the Queen's Eightieth Birthday Committee was held at 20 Hanover Square on April 17th, when a very numerous company assembled. Sir William occupied the chair and I was able to report that my American friend, Colonel Taylor, had arranged to join us as a representative of our cousins beyond the Atlantic who in the good old days of George III and earlier had represented the Senior Crown Colony of the Throne. I confess that when I had discussed the matter with the genial leader of Confederate Horse I had forgotten that the Newfoundlanders might have put in a claim to the same distinction.

Our first resolution was moved by Sir Walter Besant, seconded by myself and carried unanimously; it ran as follows:—

"The Queen's Eightieth Birthday Committee, believing that many American residents will be desirous of taking part in their proceedings, it is resolved that a cordial invitation shall be extended to them."

After the passing of this resolution Colonel Taylor accepted membership of the Committee

A COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

and undertook to select a list of American residents to join the Committee.

Then came the financial question, in which naturally my friend Besant as Hon. Treasurer took a special interest. We came to the conclusion that the dinner ticket should cost a guinea-and-a-half, a charge which, after the payment of the Hotel Cecil expenses, left an ample margin for printing and other incidental disbursements. Here, so to speak, we came out "into the open." Up to this time we had headed our circulars with "Private and Confidential," but henceforth we appealed to the selected public, those "honoured in various branches of intellectual achievement," for their support. The selection of "suitable representatives" was left to a sub-committee consisting of Sir Walter Besant and myself, assisted by a copy of "Who's Who for 1898." The work of reference was of infinite service to us. The only drawback was that it was one year behind time and sometimes consequently we addressed a representative honoured in some branch of "intellectual achievement" who had joined the majority. On these occasions the heirs, administrators or assigns of the honoured one accounted for his absence by reasons of convincing force, and we accepted them as satisfactory.

Up to this date the Press had not been approached. Our General Committee now consisted of some two hundred distinguished gentlemen, including the Lord Chief Justice, the Lord Mayor,

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and the Agents-General of most of the Colonies. At this point the first paragraph of the Press concerning the celebration was allowed to appear. Our—the original committee of four—desire was to make the movement spontaneous, and we succeeded in our efforts. At this meeting the proposal of Mr. Beerbohm Tree to give a *matinée* was accepted and it was left to me to approach the governing bodies of the Duke of York's School and kindred bodies. And here I may say that the theatrical portion was a great success. Her Majesty's was filled from the first row of the stalls to the last place in the gallery with an audience of children wearing uniforms. A special programme was arranged by Mr. Beerbohm Tree, which caused them huge delight.

I had had frequent interviews at Windsor with Sir Arthur Bigge and Colonel (now Sir) Richard Holmes and the authorities of the Telephone Company. It was arranged that as the Queen sat down to luncheon at Windsor at two o'clock the little spokesmen of the Duke of York's School should at the beat of the baton of the band-master wish Her Majesty "Many Happy Returns of the Day." Then followed the National Anthem sung by thousands of youthful voices. At first it was a little uncertain whether this programme could be carried out, as the Queen was not fond of the telephone. But Her Majesty, I believe, to please those nearest and dearest to her, overcame her objection and listened with delight to the

“MANY HAPPY RETURNS”

voices of the children. Her Majesty loved children, and I had this in my mind when I suggested that children should form exclusively the audience at the memorable matinée of the Queen's Eightieth Birthday. The Queen had a further pleasure in listening to my friend Mr. Tree as he cordially greeted his juvenile audience and explained to them that the most illustrious lady in the world was about to listen to them. I have reason to believe that all passed off well at Windsor. The programme in London was followed by our Sovereign and other Royal listeners and the “Many Happy Returns of the Day to Your Majesty” and the National Anthem sang with heartiness by the little ones gave genuine pleasure to the dear and venerable lady so far away and to whom we were all anxious to do honour. After this event I was told the Queen frequently listened through the telephone to the performances at the opera and the concert halls. It is a pleasant recollection to me that it is perhaps possible that I may have had some small share in adding to the pleasures that her late Majesty enjoyed during the last few months of her long and glorious reign. I may add that when the names of the schools were submitted to Her Majesty, the Queen suggested that the list would be incomplete without some representatives of Ireland, and the gracious command was carried into effect.

On the 1st of May, when the meeting of the Committee was held again in Hanover Square, I

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find the following entry in the Minutes: "The Hon. Secretary reported that he had obtained the consent of the governing bodies of the Duke of York's School and other institutions of a kindred character to be present at Her Majesty's Theatre at the matinée of the 24th of May, and suggested that it might be pleasing to the Queen to be able to hear at Windsor through the telephone the singing of the National Anthem by the youthful audience." Then comes the entry, "The Hon. Secretary was authorised to learn Her Majesty's pleasure upon the subject." I acted upon this authorisation with the result I have recorded.

I further reported "that acting upon a suggestion made by Lord Meath to obtain a holiday on the Queen's Birthday for the children, I had approached the Directors of the Crystal Palace and that the Board had promised to do their best to give a free afternoon to some 2,000 scholars on that day," an announcement that was considered eminently satisfactory.

We now turned our attention to the Imperial Dinner and it was tentatively arranged that Colonel Taylor should speak for America, Lord Strathcona for Canada, Sir Daniel Tennant for Natal, Sir Andrew Clarke for Australasia, Sir M. Bhowndegree for India, and the Right Hon. Evelyn Ashley for the Crown Colonies. I find that at this meeting I was asked why the Press had not more numerous representatives on the General Committee, and explained "that the Press was sparsely

UNIFORM OF THE CONFEDERATE HORSE

represented on the Committee as there was a feeling among newspaper proprietors against associating the name of the paper officially with any movement requiring the aid of journalistic authority." Then the question of dress at the banquet was discussed, and it was decided to approach the Lord Chamberlain on the subject, with the result that all those who dined at the Queen's Eightieth Birthday Dinner appeared in uniform or *levée* dress with a few exceptions, including our American cousins, who, according to their national custom, appeared in simple garbs of sombre black. But amongst our representatives of the Senior Colonies of the Crown—the rights of Newfoundland reserved—there was an exception. My excellent friend Colonel Taylor appeared in full uniform.

"What was the uniform of the Regiment of Confederate Horse to which you belonged, Colonel?" I asked.

"Well," said he, smiling, "when we were on service I should say shirt-sleeves."

"But you are not on service now, Colonel," I replied. "You are going to do honour to our Queen."

"Quite right, our Queen."

"And you should wear your best."

"Quite right again, sir, and I will."

So on the occasion of the banquet the gallant Colonel appeared in a handsome uniform of blue and silver grey, and made after Lord Rosebery's

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oration perhaps the best speech of that ever memorable evening.

The last meeting of the Committee was held on May the 16th, when the following were present :— Sir William Robinson, Sir John Jardine, Colonel and Sheriff Probyn, Alderman and Sheriff Alliston, Sir Augustus Adderley, Sir Walter Peace, Colonel Mellard Henniker, Colonel J. D. Taylor, Messrs. F. C. Van Dwyer, J. C. Parkinson, Gilbert Parker, C. Purdon Clarke, J. W. Previt, W. H. J. Bool, Joseph Watson, Henry Newbolt, J. MacAlister, Sir Squire Bancroft, Sir Owen Tudor Burne, Sir Daniel Tennant, Sir Alexander MacKenzie, Sir Frederick Bridge, Sir William Broadbent, Sir Wyke Bayliss, Sir Philip Magnus, the Right Hon. Evelyn Ashley, Sir Walter Besant and myself.

At this gathering we had the pleasing information that Lord Rosebery had consented to take the chair. Then comes an entry in the Minute Book which shows that it was a little difficult with so large a company to come to an immediate decision. “ The question of the apportionment of speeches to be made on the 24th instant at the banquet led to a long discussion ; various suggestions were made which were not adopted.” Ultimately it was proposed by Sheriff and Colonel Probyn, seconded by Sir Wyke Bayliss and carried, “ that this matter and all other matters connected with the banquet be left in the hands of a sub-committee consisting of Sir William Robinson, Sir Walter Besant and Mr. Arthur W.

A SPLENDID SUCCESS

à Beckett, and this arrangement be accepted and adopted by the Committee." So to the original quartette (less Sir Arthur Trendell who, however, was active to the last) was left the final arrangements. As a matter of fact, as my story will have shown, those four individuals had much to do with the movement from start to finish.

Well, the banquet was a splendid success. At one of our last meetings I had been able to report that I had seen Sir Arthur Bigge, the Private Secretary of Her late Majesty, who had expressed his willingness to lay before the Queen the various schemes of the Committee for celebrating her eightieth birthday. Sir Arthur had received a list of the Committee brought up to date for submission to Her Majesty and expressed his conviction that the Queen would be pleased to receive a telegram of congratulation from those who took part in the banquet of the 24th of May, and would no doubt graciously accept an album containing their signatures. This programme was carried out. At the banquet Lord Rosebery sent the following telegram :—" To Sir Arthur Bigge, Windsor Castle.—A Banquet of Her Majesty's subjects from all parts of Her Empire held to celebrate her eightieth birthday beg to offer Her Majesty their humble, loyal and devoted congratulations. (Signed) ROSEBERY, Chairman," and in the course of the evening a gracious response was received from Her Majesty. I shall never forget the scene. The large hall of the Hotel Cecil was thronged with

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men all of whom—to quote poor Besant's pet phrase—"had received honour in some branch of intellectual achievement." Representatives of all portions of our mighty Empire (inclusive of that "Senior Crown Colony" the United States of America) testified to the love and loyalty and reverence that her people felt for their venerable and venerated Queen. We had a band in the orchestra playing appropriate national airs, Canadian, Indian, Australian. But perhaps the greatest burst of cheering that shook the hall on that never-to-be-forgotten evening was the one that greeted the representative of America, Colonel Taylor, handsome in his person and his uniform; he spoke from his heart and testified to the love the new country felt for the old, "their real" home, and the veneration in which they held "their Queen." Then came the "Star Spangled Banner" and "Rule Britannia" and enthusiastic, rapturous applause.

If I may digress for a moment and get back to my forensic Alma Mater, Gray's Inn, I saw something of the same enthusiasm a year or two ago. We—the Bench and the other members of the Honourable Society—were entertaining Mr. Choate, then American Ambassador. We had a band in the musicians' gallery. There were certain toasts—"The King," followed by the National Anthem and "The President of the United States" greeted by "The Star Spangled Banner." When it came to the toast of "Mr. Choate—Lawyer and

ENGLISH GENTLEMEN OF THE U.S.A.

Diplomatist," there was some curiosity to hear what tune would be selected as an appropriate one to do him honour. It came amongst the heartiest cheering I had ever heard in that old hall which can have very "noisy nights" when new members have been added to the Bar and other joyful occasions. The band played "A fine old English Gentleman." At the Hotel Cecil on the occasion of the Eightieth Birthday of Queen Victoria we felt that when we were listening to Colonel Taylor—once gallant leader of Confederate Horse, now a peaceful citizen of the United States—we were hanging on the words, the burning words, of an English gentleman. Yes, in spite of the mistakes of Farmer George and the victories of that other George of good old English parentage, the descendants of the Virginians were holding their own as of yore as loyal protectors of the British Throne.

It was an evening of successes. All the speeches were excellent from that of the splendid oration of Lord Rosebery to the less ambitious efforts of some of the representatives of the Colonies. But in my memory the words of Colonel Taylor remain least forgotten. The greeting came from beyond the seas bringing back the recollections of the descendants of Esmond who preserved in the new country the traditions of the old, a greeting proving that in spite of the passing of the centuries blood was thicker than water.

Yes, it was a triumph. The quartette who

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originated the demonstration had never been doubtful about the result. They had felt that only a whisper was necessary to produce the burst of enthusiasm that greeted good Queen Victoria on her eightieth birthday. As I write there lies on the table before me a letter addressed to me by Sir Arthur Trendell. It runs as follows :—"What a success we had last night. You on whom the bulk of the work fell ought to feel very proud and happy."

I have referred in the course of the account of my connection with the Queen's Eightieth Birthday Committee to my visits to that most kind and courteous gentleman, Sir Arthur Bigge. I owed my introduction to him to Colonel (now Sir Richard) Holmes, for many years the Royal Librarian at Windsor Castle. Sir Walter Besant, who knew I was fond of the Society of Antiquaries—I had once joined in a discussion in their rooms at Burlington House, anent the discovery of some bones at Canterbury said to be the mortal remains of St. Thomas à Beckett—asked me to dine as his guest at one of their banquets. On one side was Sir Walter and on my other hand I had Sir Richard Holmes for a neighbour. I think I had had the pleasure of meeting him years before at the table of the late Sir Henry Thompson in Wimpole Street. I found him a most delightful conversationist. At the time I was full of the Eightieth Birthday Celebration and told him all about it. He was particularly pleased with the idea of transmitting

AT WINDSOR CASTLE

the children's voices from the Haymarket to Windsor. He very kindly promised to get me an interview with Sir Arthur Bigge if I would come to the Castle on the following Sunday. I most gratefully accepted the invitation, and on Sunday, the 7th of May, 1899, saw the late Queen for the last time. I spent a large part of the day in the Library, where Colonel Holmes showed me a number of treasures. I was gratified to find a presentation copy of "The Maske of Flowers," which Her Majesty had graciously accepted when I was Master of the Revels at Gray's Inn, and in that capacity had revived the work in honour of her first Jubilee. Then Colonel Holmes showed me the built-up door through which the shade of Queen Elizabeth was said to glide when she desired to take a walk in a long corridor. On one occasion it is said that the Royal Spinster frightened an officer in the Guards who had never felt alarm amidst a shower of bullets and shells in Egypt.

While we were looking at the books the news came that the Queen was going for a drive. So Colonel Holmes took me to a window where I could have a view of Her Majesty entering her carriage. It was the last time, to the best of my belief, that I saw the Queen, although I may have seen her pass the Junior United Service Club, of which I am a member on the occasion of her departure for Ireland.

Subsequently I saw Sir Arthur Bigge both at Windsor and at Buckingham Palace and was much

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struck with the interest Her Majesty evidently took in all our proceedings. On the 19th of July I received a gracious message from the Queen in recognition of the Presentation of Autographs which her Eightieth Birthday Committee had sent to her. In May, 1899, the Queen was full of energy and seemed to be in excellent health. It never occurred to any of us in those days that within a couple of years she would have left us. Before this last glimpse of the Queen I had seen her from the stage put up by the late Sir Augustus Harris, when that genial and accomplished gentleman took down an opera troupe to perform before Her Majesty in Windsor Castle.

I was editing the *Sunday Times*, of which Sir Augustus was the chief proprietor, and my friend had suggested that I should be rated in his troupe as a super—he procured me a first-class card, which secured for me the same consideration as that extended to Madame Albani and other members of the Royal Italian Opera. It was on a Saturday night, and I was anxious to return to the editorship of my paper, then being printed near Ludgate Circus. I was in evening dress and was standing on the stage with my eyes close to the small peephole in the curtain watching the appearance of Her Majesty and the guests and members of the Household who were to form the audience. The orchestra was below me placed as in position at Covent Garden. The musicians were banked in with the choicest flowers. In the centre of the

“ FAUST ” AT WINDSOR

hall was a platform backed up with tiers of chairs evidently intended for the less important guests. By degrees the chairs were occupied and then some of the Royalties took their places on the platform. Standing alone was a golden chair with a small table in front of it on which was placed an opera glass and a bouquet. There was a pause and then the orchestra played the National Anthem and a dignified old lady with silvery hair and a beautiful complexion walked in leaning on an ebony stick with her right hand and her left resting on the outstretched arm of an Indian attendant. The dignified old lady turned for a second towards her guests, bowed in recognition of their presence and sat down on the chair provided for her. She glanced at her programme and took up her opera glass. At this moment someone touched my arm. It was Sir Augustus Harris in evening dress. “ My dear fellow,” said he, “ what are you doing ? We must clear off as quick as we can. We are keeping the stage waiting.”

I turned round. What Sir Augustus had said was true enough. Faust as an aged magician was seated looking at his skull and Madame Albani already in position as a vision of Marguerite—the space on the stage of the Theatre Royal, Windsor Castle, was cramped—was smiling at our dilemma.

“ I say,” continued Sir Augustus, “ you were within an ace of appearing before the Queen. If I hadn’t spoken to you we should have rung up and you would have been discovered cheek by

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jowl with Faust in his wig and disguise cloak. The Queen is a most amiable lady, but she wouldn't have cared to have you presented to her in that unceremonious fashion."

I waited through the act and it was certainly rather a gloomy performance, as it is against etiquette to applaud unless the signal is given by Royal hands. The Queen listened intently but without applauding. As a youngster I was very fond of amateur theatricals—I am told that I was the worst actor on the stage, and I am accustomed to apathetic audiences—but never in my life did I come across an assembly so absolutely devoid of enthusiasm. Later on the principals had the honour of being introduced to the Queen, who treated them with her customary courteous kindness. Sir Augustus himself, after being allowed the use of the telegraph at Windsor Castle to wire the progress of the performance to the *Sunday Times*, was put up in the building and therefore did not avail himself of the Royal Special that carried the troupe back to Paddington. During my visit in Sir Augustus's troupe I noticed that some of the traditions connected with the performances in the time of the Prince Consort were still preserved. On the arrival of the company tea was served in the Reubens Room and another magnificent apartment close to the banqueting hall reserved for the stage and auditorium—strange to say that the refreshments came from outside the Palace. When Charles Kean was *entrepreneur*

QUEEN VICTORIA'S FUNERAL

this was the arrangement and the plan was not disturbed half-a-century later.

I come to the last scene of all connected with the reign of the great Queen. It was the day of her late Majesty's funeral. I have already said that I had been enabled as President of the Institute of Journalists to do what I could to ensure that only members of the Press worthy of their profession should be allowed to come near the Royal person. I had been treated with so much kindness and courtesy on all sides that I was rather surprised not to receive some cards for which I had applied. As a matter of fact, the cards had been issued, but owing to a mistake in the direction did not reach us until the day after the event.

I was very anxious to be present at the funeral to be able with thousands of other loyal subjects to pay my last mark of respect to the remains of my Sovereign. I had read in the newspaper that officers in uniform would be permitted to pass the line of sentries. On my retirement from the Queen's Service Her Majesty had graciously permitted me to retain my rank and to wear the uniform of my regiment in my retirement, so I once again donned my uniform as a Captain retired of the 4th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, and thus was able to take my part in the funeral.

Not very long ago, in the autumn of 1905, I was at Osborne. I was in the grounds of King

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Edward VII's gift to the nation. I had admired the admirable arrangements that had been made under His Majesty's personal supervision for the comfort of his officers of the United Service who had been forced by ill-health to seek the opinion of the Medical Board. I was talking to a resident who had come back from foreign service for the moment in need of the air of the Isle of Wight to complete his convalescence. He, like many of his brother officers, had suffered from the terrible climate of the tropics. He was loud in his grateful thanks to those who had done so much to make his way smooth to his pristine strength and vigour.

It was impossible to imagine a more delightful spot or a more thoughtful regime for the benefit of the martial patients. All that could be done for them had been accomplished. The latest gift of His Majesty, a motor car, was resting under the cover of a shed close to the building. The library, full of books that had not been disturbed since the late Queen's death, was at the service of the King's guests in the building. The drawing-room had its piano and pianola. The pictures that the late Queen loved were hanging on the walls under the protection of her son's officers. On every hand there were traces of the kindness and forethought of King Edward. It was a day when the State Apartments were open to the public, and orderly throngs of visitors passed through the rooms that had been in use during the lifetime of

OSBORNE AS IT IS

Queen Victoria. In every one of them were traces of the home life that had made the Royal Family the happiest domestic circle in the United Kingdom. Here were pictures and statues of our present Sovereign and his brothers and sisters when they were little boys and girls. One of the most popular portraits in the whole collection was a presentment of our King in sailor costume taken when he had years before him to reach his teens. There were little chairs, round a small table, used long ago by their Royal Highnesses the Princes and Princesses of the Blood Royal, when each of them experienced the same delights that are now enjoyed by Prince Edward and his brothers, and the young lady who represents the female branch of the Family of the present Prince and Princess of Wales.

The weather was royal weather. The sun was shining brightly over the trees with their autumnal tints and the blue waters of the Solent were washing the beach of Osborne. In the distance was the opposite shore of Hampshire, and Portsmouth could be seen, and the Victory, Nelson's battleship, easily imagined. Only a spectator of the most callous temperament could remain unmoved. There were certainly no such persons in the grounds of Osborne House when I visited them.

As I sat enjoying the sunshine a vision of the past rose before me. I thought of much that I have written in these pages and my recollections carried me back to that evening in the Hall of

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Gray's Inn with which I have opened this chapter. I heard the tolling of the bell and the voice of the Treasurer once again—

“The Queen is dead—Long live the King!”

As I returned to the House I noticed a room with its blinds drawn down in sharp contrast with the other apartments, which were suggestive of all that was cheerful.

“Yes,” said my companion in answer to my question, “that room is never accessible to visitors. It is kept sacred to a great memory. It is the room in which the late Queen died.”

Once more I heard the voice of the Treasurer of Gray's Inn and the tolling of the chapel bell.

“The Queen is dead—Long live the King!”

CHAPTER X

THE TRIUMPH OF THE HALFPENNY

Cheapening the Bench—Economy in the Book Market—The Rise of the Free Library—Educating the Working Man—Sir Walter Besant and the Authors' Society—The Boz Club Dinners—Economy in Clubland—Gradual Disappearance of the "Dead Head"—Railway Journey Extraordinary—The Triumph of Charity.

CERTAINLY one of the signs of the times is the universal love of cheapness. In the eighteen hundreds it was "the thing" to be rich. Money represented birth, education, and all that was refined. But as we live in other times, birth and education are no longer a part of money. In fact it seems that most money comes to those who have neither. Of course, I use the word birth in the German sense. A man without so many quarterings is not "born." He may have sprung into existence—probably did—but he is not "born." Well, it is natural that as England has a fairly long history, those who live in England set some value upon the traditions of birth. Undoubtedly, the gentlemen who came over to Hastings and its "hinterland" were the adventurers whose personal character would not bear with advantage to their reputation close investigation. If tradition is to be believed, most of these individuals were "well known to the police" in Normandy. No doubt there was considerable rejoicing on the

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other side of the Channel when William Fitz-Battleaxe and Thomas Annexgold took themselves off to England and remained there. "They left their country for their country's good," as it used to be said of the temporary occupants of the dock at the Old Bailey when those recently sentenced prisoners were ordered "transportation."

I believe, according to the highest authorities of the College at Arms, it takes four generations to make a gentleman. Probably in the time of William the Conqueror, with the assistance of a generous disregard of the rights of property originally belonging to the occupants of the soil, the period of transformation was even less. Thomas d'Annexgold in consideration of his providing for the use of William the Conqueror, when needed, fifty fully equipped horse-soldiers, was given by that generous donor the Isle of Thanet. All Thomas had to do was to take the property thus presented to him. Having settled comfortably, say (after the sacking), at Broadstairs, he next procured the necessary force of Cavalry required by his liege lord and master—the unlawful possessor (from a strictly Saxon point of view) of the Tower of London. He found John Pilfer, Henry Snatchpurse, Mortimer Bonebuttons were all likely lads who had done good service in removing the superfluous possessions of the slain and wounded at Hastings. So these three worthies signed their marks and became possessed

THE VALUE OF BIRTH

of undeveloped Ramsgate, incipient Herne Bay, and immature Margate on condition that they furnished when needed their illustrious lord and master, Earl Thomas d'Annexgold of Thanet, with twenty men at arms a-piece. The Lords of the King generally managed to have a few retainers over for their own service so as to be able more or less to keep, so to speak, an eye upon the Sovereign. No doubt, some arrangement of this character was of considerable assistance in overcoming the scruples of King John to his signature of Magna Charta. Once landed proprietors, the Norman adventurers, having a stake in the country, became wearers of coat armour—the equivalent from a heraldic point of view to gentlemen. They have retained the status, when they have not parted with the land, ever since. Land represented rent, otherwise money, so money also meant birth. But in the present century such enormous fortunes have been made by men who commenced business with the traditional half-crown, that birth is no longer guaranteed by money. As a consequence it is no longer "smart" to be rich, and this being so, people of birth can admit to being hard up. If this admission is once made, why should not a man, and especially a woman, of birth purchase for a halfpenny what hitherto had been priced at double the money?

So everything has become cheaper. For instance, there is law. Half-a-century ago my father was a Metropolitan police magistrate. In

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those days—and I fancy the tradition is observed to-day—it was the custom to give members of the Bar who were also authors and journalists these minor judicial appointments. My father was a case in point. He was on the original staff of *Punch*, author of the “Comic History of England” and “Comic Blackstone,” a salaried leader-writer for the *Times* and other London papers. He was also a member of the Bar of so many years’ standing—as a natural consequence he was appointed a Metropolitan police magistrate. In his time he used to sit in court three days a week alternately with a colleague who sat the other three. He had a well-earned holiday of a month or six weeks and a generally pleasant time. It was the idea in those days, and I believe the tradition is observed to-day, that for a Metropolitan police magistrate was wanted a man with a knowledge of the world of men and things. If he were a lawyer from a forensic point of view, so much the better, and if he were not, why he had the ready service of a chief clerk and a senior colleague when he required their assistance.

A Metropolitan police magistrate said to me a short while ago, “My dear fellow, what a beak requires to-day, as he did in the time of Fielding, is the minimum of law and the maximum of common-sense.” Well, the Government, following the fashion for the cheap, have cheapened the position of stipendiaries. The salary of £1,500 a year has been the same for half-a-century, but the

CHEAPENING THE BENCH

work has grown by leaps and bounds. A magistrate, instead of sitting but three days a week, nearly always puts in an appearance five times, and sometimes six. The holidays have been shortened, and the courts, as I write, are undermanned. There has been a talk for a long time of the appointment of two or three additional Metropolitan police magistrates, and although the scheme has been recommended by a departmental committee, the plan has got "no furtherer."

And what is true about police magistrates is equally true about other appointments of a legal character. The class that used to fill them were fairly well bestowed. Men of birth and education were presumed to be out of reach of immediate want, and the honorarium that was attached to an office was frequently almost honorary. But with the decay of wealth has come the necessity for income. The age of cheapness is upon us. We have to take care of our pence assiduously.

As I propose to deal later on with the triumphant halfpenny amongst other matters anent modern journalism, I do not refer to the complete revolution effected by the simple *son* amongst our dailies, morning and evening, at this moment. But I can certainly point to the sign of cheapness giving the *coup de grace* to that old-fashioned institution, the three-volume novel. Strange to say, in spite of its disappearance, its chief supporters, the excellent circulating libraries of Mudie and W. H. Smith and others, are as

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prosperous as ever. The great establishments have adapted themselves to the requirements of the times, and nowadays acquire one-volume novels when in the eighteen hundreds they used to buy triplets.

Moreover, there is really a brisk sale in originals which have been "slightly soiled." Books—especially with handsome backs—are very decorative, and many now purchase popular novels with a view to helping out the sofa and the china cabinet. Every author looks with interest, I imagine, at the circulating libraries' list which he finds on the table of his pet club. Sometimes that list is a little disconcerting when he finds included in it his own latest novel labelled "Quite new; pages uncut." It is nearly as bad as discovering his most recent volumes of adventures in the furthest North-East, South or West in a row with the placard "All these threepence." But still it shows there is a sale of a sort for the books. In mid-Victorian days the unsuccessful stories were utilized for the lining of travelling trunks. Then there is another competitor for the cheap literary market—the free library. I must confess, to my shame, I for many years objected to burdening the rates by establishing newspaper halls for the general public. Far be it from me to suggest that the spread of civilization is not of the greatest importance and that civilization suggests universal reading, writing and ciphering. But I believe experience has taught some people

EDUCATING THE WORKING-MAN

to feel that excessive learning stops the shoe-black from putting an adequate polish on one's boots and other disadvantages. After voting against a free library—I admit it to my shame—one was established, say, four hundred miles from my dwelling-place. I furnish this geographical detail so that no one shall be able to detect the exact locality to which I refer. I was speaking to the librarian and asked him how the working-man was getting on with the ratepayers' assistance. How did he manage about the newspapers, for instance ?

" Oh, very well indeed," was the reply. " You see, we find the working-man is rather busy save in the early morning and early evening, and doesn't care much about entering the reading-room during the dinner-hour."

" Yes ? " I queried.

" Besides, I don't think he feels quite at home when at the next reading desk there may be a banker or some other grandee of that sort. However, now and again we do get an orator from the mass meeting, and he sticks to the paper reading with one eye, so to speak, and using the other to look scornfully at the representative of wealth."

" Well, what do you do ? "

" We have a very excellent rule that no reader should monopolise a paper for more than ten minutes at a time, so when the time limit is reached our janitor stands near the artisan and informs him

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of the regulation. Then the artisan regards the janitor scornfully, but goes off."

"Why?"

"Because our janitor has the qualifications to secure him—if needs be—at a music hall the responsible situation of a chucker-out. Besides the artisan has at his disposal the advertisement pages of the papers under his patronage. In the halls of our public libraries it is customary to exhibit these broadsheets at hours convenient for reference by the great—shall I say?—too much washed."

"And how do the artisans get on with the reference library?"

"Ah, there we really do attempt to advance a branch of his education that presumably has been neglected. We discourage the distribution of fiction, but we have a magnificent collection of works on heraldry. A really studious artisan, spending his entire leisure in our reference library, would in a very short while master the proper crests, coats of arms and mottoes of all the authorised wearers of such things in the United Kingdom."

"I see you make them, or rather enable them, to become heralds?"

"Quite so. It has its practical side. You see, if bricklaying, or window-glazing, or coal-heaving, or some such useful occupation becomes slack, the unemployed would turn their hands to emblazonments and coat armour. This is not exactly my

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own argument, but that is what our chairman suggested when we bought our last work of genealogical reference at six guineas."

"And how does the general lending library get on?"

"It is very popular with the ladies. We find that we are quite equal to the best circulating libraries."

"And what is the most popular of our papers?"

"Well, so far as I can judge, I should say the *Gentlewoman*," and this ended for the time our conversation.

Returning to the cheapening of books which has been one of the great features of the age, I may say my friend the late Sir Walter Besant did his utmost to convince his brother authors that the offspring of their brains should be as valuable as property as freehold lands or long leaseholds. As all the world knows (at least that world which takes any interest in "intellectual achievement"), Sir Walter was the founder of the Authors' Society. I had joined it but had never been present at any of the meetings. One day I received a summons on a post card insufficiently addressed. The prefix to my designation had been omitted and I was slightly annoyed at "being called out of my name," to use a well-known phrase. I went to the meeting. A proposed copyright bill was under discussion—ten or twelve years later there is still a measure undergoing the same consideration—and

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a well-known barrister (a member of the Society) was explaining the situation.

When he had finished I got up and asked a number of rather embarrassing questions. I was able to do this as at the time I was piloting another Bill through Parliament, and had the details of the procedure at my fingers' ends. I made myself so great a nuisance that Mr. Besant—he had not then got his knighthood—remonstrated. I submitted at once. I had no wish to be obstructive—it was only on behalf of my brother members that I was speaking, and so on. I said my name was à Beckett (with the emphasis on the prefix) and a very humble member of the Society. The last thing in the world I wished to do was to be a bore. Perhaps my zeal outran my discretion; I apologised profusely to the meeting—and especially to the Council—for wasting so much time. I sat down and then half-a-dozen members sprang up in different parts of the hall to support me, and before the meeting ended I found myself elected to the Committee and a person of very considerable importance. This commenced a friendship with Besant which lasted to the end of his life. One of the kindest and most generous of men.

“I am glad,” said he, “that you take so great an interest in copyright. No doubt you came to the meeting because you felt deeply on the subject?”

“Well no, not exactly,” I was forced to admit, as I did not wish to sail under false colours.

“Then why did you come?” asked Besant.

THE BOGUS PUBLISHER

"Because someone had sent me a post-card calling me Beckett instead of à Beckett, and I wanted to have the opportunity of attracting attention to the mistake and avoiding the chance of misdirections for the future."

Besant was amused at the answer and was a loyal friend to the end of a chapter that closed too soon. His great idea was to make men of letters men of business too. I think with the assistance of the Authors' Society he managed to a large extent to carry out his intention.

At first the publishers seemed inclined to resent his interference, but of late years our "natural enemies"—I speak as an author—have become our best friends and the hatchet is buried between us. Here I may point out that the Authors' Society and Mr. Henry Labouchere have done good service in putting down the bogus publisher who might rank with the bogus club proprietor, to whom I have made reference in an earlier page. On account of my connection with journalism I very frequently am consulted upon matters associated with the Press. On one occasion I was visited by a young man—a perfect stranger—who asked my advice under the following circumstances :

"I am a novelist," explained the youth.

I bowed.

"I am the author of a very excellent novel."

"Has it been published?"

"Not yet—but it will be shortly."

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I bowed again.

"It is called 'The Game of a Ghost': a very good title, don't you think?"

"Well, at any rate, it is unconventional—'A Game of a Ghost.' What's it all about?"

"Oh, that would be telling," said my visitor a little suspiciously; "but I don't mind saying that a man falls in love with a lady and that there is a lot about architecture and plans of dwelling-houses and that kind of thing."

"I suppose you are in an architect's office?"

"Quite right; so, of course, I have got the details accurate. Well, I sent my novel to Messrs. Chose and Co., and they say that they have never liked anything so well. They say that the title is magnificent and that the story is worthy of it. Their reader has the highest opinion about it and they will be delighted to publish it."

"Well, that seems all right; what have I to do with it?"

"Well, I want your advice. They say that before they publish it I must observe the rule of the firm—I must send them £100."

"What for?"

"Why, to pay expenses until they make a profit—then, when they do make a profit we are to divide the profits between us."

"I see; what is the difficulty?"

"Well, I can't get the £100—I am not yet of age—and my trustees, who are donkeys, refuse to advance the money."

“THE GAME OF A GHOST”

“Well, I think if I were one of the trustees I should be inclined to agree with them.”

“The same answer again! You are the fourth author I have consulted with the same result. I don’t want to hurt your feelings, but I think it right to tell you that I believe all your opposition comes from a very mean motive—professional jealousy.”

And he left me. I am afraid the trustees continued obdurate, as I have never noticed “The Game of a Ghost” in the list of any publisher. But, of course, it may have escaped my attention and may have become without my knowledge “the success of the season.”

With the commencement of the twentieth century the system of royalties has, I fancy, taken a permanent lead in advance of the payment of “a sum-down” method of remuneration. Reward by results seems quite equitable. Speaking personally, I may say that my relations with all the publishers with whom I have had the pleasure of having had business have invariably been of the most agreeable character imaginable. So I have nothing of which I can complain. Although the royalty system may be said to have come in with unusual force with the present century, it was partially in use ages ago. In the days of my youth I, as part author of a very excellent brochure now out of print, had some experience of the system. On the whole, the authors—the late editor of *Punch*, Sir F. C. Burnand, and myself—

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had rather the better of the bargain. I believe, thinking it over now after a long pause, that we really made more out of the little volume than the publishers. But, of course, I may be wrong.

The time was just after the publication of the "Battle of Dorking," which sold by tens of thousands, and when our friend in common, George Rose, whose *nom de guerre* was "Arthur Sketchley," was doing a great deal of work on the royalty system. Sir Francis Burnand and I were very anxious to visit Paris for a week-end, and we came to the conclusion that £10 a-piece would see us through without unduly interfering with our balances at our respective bankers. So we set to work and turned out in collaboration a most admirable brochure called "How to Get Out of Newgate; by One who has Done It." We did not put our names to the brochure because we thought anonymity under all the circumstances was desirable. I cannot say that the book was of any practical use to an innocent prisoner who desired to obtain freedom without the formality of a trial before a judge and jury, for although it gave a plan of Newgate, the sketch was entirely misleading. For instance, if my memory does not play me false, the sketch included "the flute players' room," "yard for letting off fireworks on the Governor's birthday," "the Chaplain's aviary," "the balloon house," and other apartments not marked in the official chart by the prison authorities. I interviewed a publisher of

“HOW TO GET OUT OF NEWGATE”

repute, who, I regret to say, has long since joined the majority. He seemed to like the idea and asked me what we wanted for it? I explained that we wanted scarcely anything. We had not taken twenty-four hours in putting it together, it was merely an amusing skit: entirely ironic—the outcome of our *Punch* situation, and we might let it go for a nominal sum.

“Well, sometimes these amusing skits are very lucrative. Arthur Sketchley’s, ‘Mrs. Brown at the Play,’ did very well indeed.” I was glad to hear it. I hoped—and I said this heartily—that “How to Get Out of Newgate; by One who has Done It” would be equally successful. My friend the publisher hoped so too. Then he took a piece of paper and made some calculations.

“Shall we say 10,000 copies?” he asked.

“Certainly,” I replied. “I think—though, of course, you know better than I—that we ought to put down 10,000 copies.”

“So much for paper, so much for printing, so much for advertising, so much for publishing. Is there anything else?”

“Well, you might put down £20—as a nominal fee for ourselves.”

“I see—so much for nominal fee,” and he added the £20 to his other figures.

“I think,” I said, “that now that you have the total you should sell the 10,000 copies before we begin to participate in the profits.”

“Then we should have to print 12,000 to give

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you a chance. Let us see how it works out—12,000 copies, 12,000 paper, 12,000 publishing. Advertising the same—nominal fee the same.” He considered for a moment. Then he shook his head. “No, I really don’t think it would be worth the bother.”

“Well, come,” said I, “suppose we don’t participate in the profits until you have sold 15,000?”

“Then we should have to print 20,000.” He made further notes and exclaimed, “better, but still——”

“Don’t bargain,” I said; “we won’t ask for a *son* of the future profits until you have sold 20,000.”

“Ah, that will do, and we will print 30,000. With 30,000 it will be all right.”

My friend very kindly gave me the nominal fee, and with it we went to Paris. But I am sorry to say I do not think the publisher quite exhausted the edition. A leading bookstall proprietor refused to exhibit the book—it sold, or ought to have sold, at a shilling—on the score that it might be taken seriously by purchasers contemplating escape from Newgate and therefore have an immoral tendency. Of course, I do not know what the sale was, because I had never an opportunity of making enquiry. Whenever I met my friend the publisher—always on some festive occasion—and referred to “How to Get Out of Newgate; by One who has Done It,” he hastened to change

DICKENS THE PIONEER OF CHEAPNESS

the subject. Not long ago I met a member of the firm and mentioned the matter to him. He searched the books for the record of a transaction that must have happened twenty or thirty years ago, but could find nothing to guide him. From this I take it that the profits could not have been very large. And yet I have a very pleasant recollection of the venture. In spite of all our work and anxiety about the success of our labours, my friend Burnand and I thoroughly enjoyed our little trip to Paris with the "nominal fee" secured for us.

In the eighteen hundreds the "Shilling Shocker" flourished, but in the new century a shilling is a great deal too dear. The "Halfpenny Thriller" or the "Farthing Startler" is much nearer the mark. Nowadays twelve pence is a very considerable sum of money, and can purchase a great many things, if not everything.

No doubt the pioneer of "literary cheapness" was Charles Dickens, who fixed his publication, *Household Words*, at a third of the customary price, "As familiar in their mouths as household words," a quotation from Shakespeare, was the motto of the publication which lived so long and only ceased to reappear in a similar form under the title of *All the Year Round*. Probably Charles Dickens wanted to get at the great bulk of the people and thought twopence a sufficient strain upon their purses. Nowadays twopence is quite enough to several classes above the social status of the

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artisan. The Duke does not scorn the "Two-penny Tube" and is quite ready to patronise the penny steamboat. If Dickens had lived into our century he would have published *Household Words* or its successor *All the Year Round* at a halfpenny. It will be remembered that he was afraid of the guinea-and-a-half regulation three-volume novel. From the first his inclination was to approach his public by cheap instalments. "Pickwick" was the first of a series to be followed by most of his novels published in shilling monthly parts with "plenty for the money" as a watch-word. It will be remembered that each of the serials written by Charles Dickens contained not only an ample amount of copy but also two large pictures illustrative of the text. These were generally representative of tragedy and comedy.

Much has been written by my friend and neighbour, Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, about Charles Dickens, but I think he has overlooked the fact that it is to the great novelist of mid-Victorian days that we owe the present triumph of the halfpenny in our bookshelves. The day is not far distant when "the penny Pickwick" will not mean a cheap cigar as it did in the days of yore, but an unabridged edition of Boz's comic masterpiece. And as I have had to refer to Charles Dickens, it may not be out of place at this point to allude to one of the features of this century—the revival of the reading of Dickens.

Members of my generation (which may be said

“THE BOZ CLUB”

to be bounded by Burnand, Straight, Dicey, Marcus Stone, Luke Fildes, Balfour, Alfred de Rothschild, and Henry Fielding Dickens) knew their Boz by heart, but the next two generations seem to have lost sight of him. If you ask the boys of twenty or ten years ago you will find that they did not read Dickens or, if it comes to that, either Scott or Thackeray or Marryat or Cooper, or the other favourite authors of the days of our childhood. This century has had the honour of re-discovering and re-popularising Charles Dickens. To the twentieth century we owe two institutions, at least, which have done excellent work in this direction—“The Boz Club” and “The Dickens Fellowship.” I have the honour of belonging to both, and in 1905 was present at the dinner of the one and the public meeting of the other, which celebrated the birthday of the great novelist. In the chair at the dinner was Lord James of Hereford, the brilliant advocate, who will be better known for ever in the Law Courts as Sir Edwin James, the name to which he gave undying fame. In 1904 the same excellent gentleman had occupied the same position, and again I had the honour of being present at the birthday banquet. But in 1904 there was an incident that I, as a rememberer of recent recollections, may be permitted to recall. We commenced our proceedings by holding an annual meeting which was as amusing as it was unexpected. We suddenly passed a number of rules, elected an all-powerful committee,

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and generally behaved in a manner quite alien to the traditions governing a post-prandial pow-wow. I must confess that I was extremely astonished. And yet our proceedings were delightfully spontaneous. I was reminded of the work of the Queen's Eightieth Birthday Quartette—to whose proceedings I have referred at some length in another chapter—whose method was “nothing if not spontaneous.” In about ten minutes we formed ourselves into a club of which the committee—the governing body—were to be as near the cabman's ideal of John Forster as possible. They were one and all to be “arbitrary coves” and were expected to behave as such. Well, their behaviour since then has not been nearly so arbitrary as might have been anticipated.

The result of this organization was a large gathering of persons “honoured in various branches of intellectual achievement” to take part in the Boz Club Dinner of 1905. It was certainly a marvellous function. “All sorts and conditions of men” were amongst the speakers. The list was started by Lord James of Hereford, who read one of the most interesting lectures I have ever heard. Then came the then Lord Chancellor with the most intelligent expression of the methods of Dickens that it has been my pleasure to welcome. Lord Halsbury was followed by Mr Choate, who I believe exhausted all that could be said about Dickens from a transatlantic point of view. The then American Ambassador was followed, to the best

THE BOZ CLUB DINNER

of my belief, by my old and valued friend, Mr. J. C. Parkinson, who spoke with most desirable length about his chief and editor of ages ago. Then that valuable contributor of after-dinner eloquence, Mr J. Comyns Carr, had very much to say about Dickens, and so had other speakers—very much indeed. Even Mr Henry Fielding Dickens, son of the great novelist, was allowed to put in a word or two about his distinguished father which, under the circumstances was nearly, I think I may be permitted to say quite, as interesting as the mass of information that had gone before. The only disappointment of the evening, if this were a disappointment, was the expression that percolated through the audience that seemingly the speeches were too short. To the best of my belief, for I confess I did not remain until quite the end of the ever-memorable dinner, all was over—the lights out and the waiters retired to rest—long before four o'clock in the morning.

To return to the triumph of the halfpenny. Perhaps it has never been known in greater perfection than in the revolution it has caused in our restaurants. I am not quite sure you can get a dinner complete for a *son*, but there are certainly banquets to be purchased for threepence. I remember when I was a small child being attracted by the legend on a placard I passed at Westminster, when I was walking with my father from his house in Kensington to his Court at Southwark. It ran as follows: "Stop! Look here! I say!

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You can get a d——d good dinner inside for 4d. ! ”
I asked my father what he thought about it ;
would it be possible ?

“ Well,” replied my father, after a moment’s reflection with one of his grave smiles, “ I don’t think that fellow promises much ; you see he doesn’t say he will give you a good dinner, but a good dinner that has been eternally cursed. A dinner, in fact, that probably would be expensive at the price of fourpence.”

Had my father lived until to-day he would have seen that a real good dinner could have been produced without the assistance of (say) Mephistopheles, for a third of a shilling. The only necessary preliminary would have to be that the intending diner must be a vegetarian. It is a little difficult to understand how the thing is done. Of course all who have lived in the eighteen hundreds know that to be able to get all the ingredients of a first-rate French dinner of admirable material and exquisitely cooked twenty years ago, for two shillings or half-a-crown, was all but impossible. I say all but impossible, because I have recollection of a friend of mine who had lived much in Paris during the Third Empire—he was the son of a famous English doctor practising in the French capital—who took me to certain cafés in Soho where he used to surprise me with dinners such as I have suggested at the prices to which I have referred.

There was a place, I believe, in Nassau Street,

“ A BEAST AT FEEDING TIME ”

called “ Le Cloche,” where you could get a chateaubriand for eightpence. Then there was that famous restaurant, near the Palace Theatre of Varieties, which was spoiled (from an economical *gourmet's* point of view) by the publication in the *Times* by Sir George Dasent of a letter recording its merits, gastronomic and financial, over the enticing signature of “ A beast at feeding time.” Sir (then Mr.) George Dasent was much struck with the Mullagatawny soup which you could procure for 4d. (*consommé* was only 3d.), and long after the other prices—once in proportion—had gone up with a run this Mullagatawny soup still was allowed to retain its pristine cheapness. Sir George was engaged by Messrs. Bradbury and Evans to edit *Once a Week* when the *Punch* firm had their quarrel with Charles Dickens, and ran the periodical to which I have alluded as the rival to *All the Year Round*. It differed from the Dickens periodical in being illustrated. Amongst the artists on the staff were Millais, Du Maurier and Charles Keene. The latter illustrated one of Mr. George Meredith's earlier stories: “ Evan Harrington; or, He would be a Gentleman.” My friend Charles Keene further supplied the illustrations to Charles Reade's novel “ A Good Fight,” which I fancy when it was published in three-volume form was called “ The Cloister and the Hearth.”

Sir George Dasent took the idea for his signature from the announcement hanging in the Zoological

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Gardens, "The beasts will be fed this afternoon at 4 o'clock," so when he wrote about the great advantage of the cheap restaurants he may have fancied he had discovered, he signed himself "A beast at feeding time." That it had been discovered before the appearance of the famous letter is quite certain. I remember dining with the late Matt. Morgan and the present Sir Francis Burnand at the restaurant long before Sir George described in print its unparalleled glories. I may add that Oliffe, to whom I have referred as the son of a famous English doctor settled in Paris—he it was who made Trouville fashionable—was a member of the Cambridge A.D.C. at the time of Sir Francis Burnand's residence at Trinity. But that the *cuisines* accustomed to the prices of Soho should come to Regent Street and Piccadilly seemed impossible. However, the "impossible" has since happened.

We Londoners are slow to take a hint. Gounod's opera "Faust" had been playing for ten or twenty years all over the Continent before it was brought out as a perfect novelty at Covent Garden. Again Wagner was laughed at as "The Music of the Future" ages and ages before he was listened to as a great master in the Opera House in Bow Street. I am under the impression that the late Prince Consort was the first to attempt to bring him into fashion. Like all the members of the Royal Family, the father of His Gracious Majesty was very musical. Prince Albert was, I believe,

CHEAP DINNERS IN PARIS

a personal acquaintance of Richard Wagner, and did his best to befriend Wagner's daughter when that talented lady attempted to obtain a hearing in England. The *Punch* of the period was full of it. The idea of the moment—as it had been before and as it often will be again—was to encourage “native talent.” The objection to the lady was that she was a German. I forget how the dispute ended, but I fancy the daughter of Wagner sang for one season and one only. We were slow to accept “The Music of the Future,” and we have been equally slow to accept the economies of the French *cuisine*, but now that we have accepted them we intend keeping them—to quote a modern colloquialism, “they have come to stay.”

We had had examples in Paris of what could be done in the shape of cheap dinners in the Palais Royal. I remember any number of years ago the soup, fish and two dishes at choice for two francs fifty centimes in the Restaurant of “The Thousand Columns.” And there was ample. I recollect when I was a boy not in my teens visiting this eating-house with my two elder brothers, when I was given what was called a *couvert d'enfant*. My elders were supplied with the regulation dinner, with its liberty of selection, and I was given clean plates. Say my brother Gilbert asked for a portion of *Creci* soup, and my brother Albert a dish of hare soup, my share would be a mixture of both. They would equally afford me support. Thus, to this day I have recollections—more or less pleasant

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—of a mixture of eels boiled and fried, plates of calf's head combined with liver and bacon, and kidney *sauté* served with lamb and mint sauce. Then I had an infinite variety of combined sweets. My brothers liked respectively meringues and plum tart, and I used to have consequently very frequently meringues à la plum tart. These banquets of the *Milles Colonnes* in the Palais Royal were recalled to me many years afterwards in "an Academy of the Kitchen" somewhere near Soho, where a dinner cooked by the students was a *specialité de la maison*. I remember dining with my brother at this establishment.

"Oh, it is only a mistake of one of those students," said the waiter when I called attention to the fact that he had brought me a plate of something mysterious: it may have been apple tart garnished with mushrooms. "If you do not like it I will bring you something else."

I admitted that I thought the dish would require an acquired taste to thoroughly appreciate its beauties, and he did bring me something else. I forget what the something else was. I fancy our dinner on the occasion to which I refer must have been supplied by a very junior class or by a body of rather backward students who were never likely to learn anything worth knowing.

Nowadays we have the establishment of the cheap West-End restaurant. At first it was believed that the prices of the wine list helped out the profit. But the latest development of the

THE RISE OF THE "A B C"

system leaves wine absolutely at the feaster's discretion. A temperance man is quite as welcome as a habitual drinker—I will not say drunkard—the more especially as neither of them is expected to give a "tip." The abolition of gratuities is also of recent date. I fancy it owes its introduction to the A B C shops, where the waitresses are forbidden to receive *pourboires*. And here may I refer to what I fancy was the *raison d'être* of the A B C.

If my memory does not play me false, when aerated bread was invented there was a strong feeling against its introduction in the bakers' trade. If I may suggest, strictly under correction, at one of the bakeries of the A B C actual violence was attempted by the rival bread producers. But the Board of Directors—so the story goes—were plucky and determined to give the public an opportunity of judging for themselves the merits of aerated bread. A *depôt* or two opened. The result was an immediate and gigantic success. A B C shops were opened in all directions and for some time had a monopoly of "the movement." But of late years rivals have appeared in the field, and perhaps those temperance tea-shops where viands of a more substantial character can be obtained are becoming rather too numerous. But no doubt the shops will right themselves. As the British economists declare—in the end the supply is controlled by the demand.

With all these indications of the possibilities

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of cheap food apparent for years in the eighteen hundreds, it was only within the limits of the last few years that inexpensive luxuries made their appearance in "smart" London. If I am not greatly mistaken, the cheap restaurants have come to stay, and it is not impossible that their inauguration may lead to startling reforms in the coffee-rooms of the leading clubs. Outside prices are sure to affect inside prices. Already there are signs that reform in dinner rates is in the air. At some of the ladies' clubs the prices are a third of the tariff of the men's clubs. At present men are inclined to submit to the *laissez aller* policy of the house committees. But when married men with clubs are entertained by their wives at their clubs they will wake up to the possibilities of the situation. When Colonel Chose, of the Sword and Cutlass Club, finds that his wife, Mrs. Chose, can give him a far better and cheaper dinner at her club (the Ladies' Torpedo and Dynamite Club) than he can get at his own, he will soon begin to remonstrate with the Committee in eloquent letters of inordinate length.

As I have said in an earlier chapter, the ladies are leading the way in clubland all along the line. From the club to the dwelling-house is nowadays not very far, and again a revolution may be expected in our domestic kitchens. Lastly, there are the first-class hotels. At present, London seems to be ignorant of what is happening in her midst. The West-End hotels are excellently

“SMART” TO BE “HARD UP”

managed, but the tariffs are not founded on the prices charged at such places as the Popular Café. But further afield the cheap system is on the increase. The week-end tickets issued as a combination of railways and hotels are a revelation and an admission. For a couple of guineas you can have a railway ticket, according to Bradshaw worth nearly the whole of the money, with two days' board and lodging at a first-class hotel thrown in. To allow of the arrangements there must have been a large margin of profit upon which to draw somewhere. The profit may have been with the hotels or with the railway companies. I should say that the hotels had the larger share of the profits, when I see what the cheap West-End restaurants are doing. So before we get to the next or second twentieth of the century, we may expect to see justice and enormous changes—unless of course there is an alteration in the present fashion. As I write it is rather “smart” to be hard up—there is no disgrace in impecuniosity. While this is so there will be no need to pay eighteenpence for a shilling's value. There may be a revulsion of feeling—but so far it seems likely that the triumph of the halfpenny is to be acknowledged in the kitchen.

It has been a saying for years across the Channel that only princes, madmen and Englishmen travel first-class. Nowadays this sneer, so far as our fellow-countrymen are concerned, is out of date. People of the highest social position pride

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themselves upon their preference for third. Even ladies, who twenty years ago or less would have fainted at the idea of entering an omnibus, now delight in that economical vehicle, and think nothing of taking long journeys by the cheapest class. It is my honour and highly-prized privilege to know quite a number of ecclesiastics. I happened to meet one of them the other day in the compartment in which I myself was travelling. We spoke of many subjects, amongst them some of a professional character. The ecclesiastic—he had a vote in Parliament—was holding forth very eloquently upon the virtue of humility and the sin of pride. Suddenly he stopped and laughed.

“ And yet I am a nice specimen of humility—why do you think I am travelling third ? ”

“ To save expense, I suppose—that is my reason.”

“ Yes, to a certain extent. Third-class carriages are as comfortable as first, and in these hard times one must not be wasteful, but why I am travelling third is because in spite of the difference of fares, which is too small to have weight with me, I will not travel second.”

“ Indeed ? ”

“ I confess it is my nasty pride. I am quite safe third, because no servant expects to travel by it. If I go second, the chances are that I shall sit beside my butler and opposite my wife’s ladies’ maid. Both excellent people, no doubt,

AN AMUSING BISHOP

in their way, but persons that are more on a level with me in church."

Old traditions die hard, and the right of the servant to travel second-class survives.

My ecclesiastic was a very amusing pillar of the Church. He had recently returned from the United States. He had met in the new country "divines of all theological colours." The phrase was his own.

"It is strange," said he, "that the objection to colour still exists. I once ventured to remonstrate with the wife of a worthy brother of my own communion because she flatly refused to dine with a clergyman of the Church of England because he was negro-born."

"Indeed! What did she say?"

"She admitted that she would have to meet him in heaven, but she said she preferred to wait until then!"

Lastly, there is a triumph of the halfpenny in our homes. In the eighteen hundreds "no one who was anybody" could exist without a town house. It was an absolute necessity of a Member of Parliament. He was in London during the session, and must entertain in Eaton Square or Mayfair. Nowadays he leaves his wife and family at home in the country, and comes up to a hotel or takes for a few weeks a furnished flat—at an enormous sacrifice to the proprietor, who wishes to be rid of it—and then goes home again. Not even large rooms are nowadays necessary

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because if you have a daughter to be married "the reception is held afterwards at such and such a hall." This has certainly been "good for trade"—for the proprietors of some of the picture galleries. Art and hearts frequently go together in this connection. The young lady is married at the most fashionable church, and the cold collation follows on at a suite of art saloons, which contains one small apartment devoted to the nuptial presents, under the charge of a wedding guest who somehow suggests the ever-watchful eye of Scotland Yard. I am not sure that the triumph of the halfpenny has not even influenced the welfare of the engaged ones.

In the eighteen hundreds people took some trouble about the selection of their gifts. The stores devoted a great deal of attention to this department and had always on view *cadeaux*, one-sixth silver to five-sixths morocco case. I confess that I have a sympathy with the old-fashioned notion of giving gifts to "the dear young couple" on their first start on a combined existence. I still appreciate the kindness of my friends in years gone by in presenting us with the fifteen carriage clocks, twelve silver card cases, twenty-six salt cellars, and ten dinner gongs, which have been so useful to us ever since the happy event. As we wrote at the time, these wedding gifts were "just what we wanted." We have but lately taken into use the second dinner gong—the remaining eight are still in reserve. The original

“ DEAD HEADS ”

gong has gone to be repaired, but on its return⁹⁷¹ we are told we shall find it as good as ever.

This thirst for economy has also extended to the theatres, and here I think I may say with advantage to their proprietors. The British public, from the small tobacconist who enters the pit or the upper circle with an order for displaying a theatre bill, to the lady of strawberry leaves coronet who wants a box as a possible return for a card for a reception, has no idea of the value of theatrical seats. There is nothing so distasteful, I fancy, to the actor-manager, as the presence of “ dead heads,” and yet it is difficult to say how he can do without them. When the success of a play is in the balance, these gratis visitors are of great value to fill up the rows of what would be, but for their presence, empty benches. “ Nothing succeeds like success,” and the triumph of putting up a placard of “ House Full ” or “ Standing Room Only ” is worth the struggle. In the eighteen hundreds the outward and visible sign of a “ dead head ” was a red opera cloak. This garment, like charity, covered a multitude of sins. But the sins of the “ dead head ” in her red opera cloak were chiefly of a sartorial character. I say chiefly, but there were other acts of omission. As a rule she never smiled, and thought it *infra dig* to applaud. The “ dead heads ” were never grateful. In fact, they were a thorn in the flesh of every self-respecting manager, and all managers are self-respecting. Of course, I do not include

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authors and critics and other persons having a traditional right to be present at a theatrical performance. In the eighteen hundreds I was a dramatic author myself, and even now am occasionally a critic, so when any of my friends whose names appear on the play-bills under the Lord Chamberlain's license are kind enough to invite me to be present at their performances, I am only too delighted to avail myself of the privilege, and I trust I behave myself.

I know the intense anxiety of the life of a theatrical manager for the success of his undertaking. There is nothing more exhaustive—with the possible exception of owning a newspaper—than running a theatre. The payments are weekly and must be paid—the receipts are nightly and must be received to make both ends meet. You can make a handsome fortune in a couple of months and lose it in a fortnight. So I feel deeply interested in the fortunes of theatrical managers, and when they talk of their entire devotion to Art (with a capital initial) I admire them for their pluck and sincerity. But I do not think it quite fair that the general public should take them “at the foot of the letter.” Of course, Art is magnificent, glorious, unspeakable, but still there is a small voice whispering in the ear of our greatest men telling of certain figures connected with the butcher, the baker and candlestick-maker. A slave stood behind the Conqueror in his car of victory to remind

CHEAP TRIPS

him that he was mortal. Nowadays the same interfering official would probably remind his master that the County Court was immortal.

To return to the triumph of the halfpenny in the auditorium. People of the highest respectability are now discovering that it is possible to enter the pit at a *matinée* without any appreciable loss of dignity. Half-a-crown is not much, and perhaps is cheaper in the long run than bothering a manager for a box which entails cabs, tips to the attendants, and other incidental expenses. I honestly believe that the habit of going to *matinées* in the pit—which I fancy is becoming quite a confirmed custom with “dead heads”—is most beneficial to the theatrical treasury.

But the triumph of the halfpenny has even been acknowledged not only by the “smart set” but by that large and influential mass of people who were the friends and acquaintances of Mr. Sam Gerridge, gasfitter and small tradesman. The other day—during the past autumn—upon the invitation of a well-known society started for the recreation of mankind, I found an excursion that promised me a day’s pleasure at what I considered a very reasonable rate. So that I may not be considered to be personal, I will not mention the name of the association nor give the exact places we visited. I have purposely suggested an utterly impossible journey, but it conveys the impression I had of the places I had seen during the day’s hard work. On my return in a very

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comfortable railway carriage I found one of my fellow-travellers in rather a nasty temper. It appeared that he had been disappointed. He was the exception proving the rule, as the other excursionists seemed absolutely delighted.

“Oh, it ought to have been done better,” he grumbled. “Why, we started at a time when we had scarcely finished our breakfasts—nine o’clock is too soon—mind you, when you are going for a holiday.”

“But you see we had to travel over a good deal of ground.”

“Of course we had. We shouldn’t have come if we hadn’t. Well now, look here, why did we get to Margate when the sea was up and there were no sands?”

“Well, it may have been difficult to fit in the tide with the railway arrangements.”

“Then what was the use of going to Scarborough? We were far nearer Folkestone and Dover, and I should have preferred them—I have never seen them.”

“But our visit to Scarborough enabled us to see York Minster.”

“Not a patch upon Canterbury Cathedral, to my mind. Then we hadn’t time to go over the stables at Newmarket.”

“Well, mind, our time was very limited!”

“I know that, but they might have given an hour or even thirty minutes to look at the Colleges when we got to Oxford.”

CHARITY TO THE FRONT

" Yes, yes, but then we did stay forty minutes at Cambridge."

" Quite so, but I would far sooner have had that half-hour when we were at Portsmouth. I give you my word, I had scarcely time to see the *Victory* before we had to start away for Cardiff."

" Well, if you think it over, you got a good deal for your money: Margate, Scarborough, York, Newmarket, Oxford, Cambridge, Portsmouth, and Cardiff isn't bad for one day's excursion. Seriously, I think you had good worth for your money."

" Good worth for our money indeed!" he exclaimed in a tone of indignant surprise. " Why it was the most expensive trip of the season. Why, every man jack of us paid four and three-pence halfpenny!"

It is satisfactory to note that the triumph of the halfpenny has not reached one item of the national expenditure. In spite of the growing love of economy, caused perhaps by a vivid remembrance of recent " hard times," there is no lack of charity. A story of genuine distress has only to obtain publicity in the Press to show that purse strings can be unloosened when there is a necessity for a good Samaritan. And this exhibition of benevolence is very frequently accompanied by a desire for privacy. The anonymous benefactor prefers misleading initials to the publication of his real name.

On the whole, the triumph of the halfpenny may be welcomed as a satisfactory incident in the

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history of the nation. Englishmen have often been called—with some show of reason—pursuproud. It is fortunate that, although to be “hard up” is quite fashionable, it has not ceased to be “quite the right thing” to remember one’s poorer neighbours, and the great supporter of this wholesome belief is no less illustrious a personage than Edward the Seventh—the patron of all works of mercy for the sick and otherwise distressed.

CHAPTER XI

EVE IN EXCELSIS

"Leech's Ladies"—"Bloomerism" and "The Girl of the Period"—The Spinster Novel—Women Journalists—Thackeray and the Reporter—Monks as Journalists—The Merchant Adventurers of St. Thomas à Beckett—The Morals of the Theatre—The Stage as a Profession—Lady Shopkeepers—The Press Bazaar—The Wellington Relics—Royal Visitors—Angels in the Sick Room—Lady Politicians.

PERHAPS the greatest feature of the present epoch has been the establishment of the Modern Woman. There have been heralds of her approach for the last half-a-century, but it is only during the last five years that she has really put in her appearance. It is only now that, so to speak, we have been officially informed that she has come and intends to stay. We who have lived a fairish portion of the last century can remember the Bloomer period. The revolt of the female was subdued by that great caricaturist and most kindly of men, John Leech. I knew him as a boy very well. He had been a medical student and was an intimate friend of my father in the early days of *Punch*, to which famous publication they contributed some of their best work. Leech was the type of the thoroughly manly Englishman, straightforward, honest as the day, and fond of sport. His girls were thoroughly English ladies. They were sweet-tempered, soft-hearted, charitable, active young gentlewomen.

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Intensely feminine, as femininity was understood before the great feminine revival. They would play the piano and a game of croquet, row a boat, and speak French and German. But, best of all, they could hold in reverence Man. Man was never "mere man" to them. Man was an adviser, a protector, the predominant partner. Leech's ladies, when they married, did not want to pick up their husband's Latin or teach him politics. They were quite satisfied to look after the house, the wardrobe, and—until the little ones became big ones—be responsible for the good behaviour of the children. I am sufficiently old-fashioned to think a great deal can be said in favour of Leech's ladies as we see them depicted with all their frank British beauty in the early and (may I say ?) the best pages of *Punch*.

Mr. Dana Gibson has introduced his American Girls. They have appeared in print and on the stage. They are very attractive—after a fashion—but in my mind they are not a patch (to use a colloquialism) on the dear, sweet, half-educated (according to modern ideas) maidens of the pre-Du Maurier days. So to speak, you knew where you were with Leech's ladies. You knew that you would never be bored, that they would always amuse you by their *naïveté*, they would look after you if you were ill, comfort you if you were worried by "business," stand by you through thick and thin. Leech's ladies believed in the old marriage vow at the altar. She took you for

“ LEECH'S LADIES ”

better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health. You were something more than a “mere man” to her. And, strange to say, I honestly believe that, in spite of the great feminine revival, there are still survivals of Leech's ladies. They still exist in country mansions, quiet vicarages, and even in fashionable flats. You may know them by the respect in which they are held by their mankind. When a husband can venture to ask a friend to dinner, when a brother says his sister is a “good sort,” when a son talks of his mother as “mumsey” or “mummie,” you may be sure you are within reach of one of Leech's ladies. I am not sure that Leech's ladies are so much respected as “the new woman”—they don't come out in the Tripos List, or wish to be made barristers, or worry hospital doctors—but they are loved by their mankind. And that counts for something in this wicked world.

Mrs. Bloomer and her followers interfered seriously with Leech's ladies. If every young lady was to become strong-minded and learned, what was to become of Laura, Fanny and Alice and the other charming daughters of Eve that influenced Britons in the mid-century? Leech laughed to scorn the Brook Green Volunteers at the time of the proposed French invasion under the Prince de Joinville, and his vigorous pencil sent Mrs. Bloomer back to America to resume skirts—so I am told—and to live and die a model of domesticity. Leech caricatured the masculine mode of

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dress and habit amongst ladies. He depicted hideous females garbed as men and smoking cigars. What would he have said and thought of the "smoke-rooms" of our ladies' clubs? Then he conciliated the sex by showing in one of *Punch's Almanacks* how lovely women could look if they pleased even when they adopted men's attire. In one of the pictures he represented mounting guard at St. James's Palace with female musicians in the regulation uniform of the Household Brigade playing the piano and the guitar. After all, not so very unlike the stringed orchestra of the military bands of the period. Then he gave us female flunkeys, female tradespeople, female *flaneurs* in female clubs. The pictures were prophetic, but the *motif* running through the series was caricature. Leech's ladies were playing at soldiers, masquerading as males—they were really as feminine as ever, and knew little about Latin and less about Greek. So the English ladies of the mid-eighteen hundreds were satisfied to remain "as they were."

I have said that my father and Leech were great friends and that they worked together in collaboration whenever the opportunity offered. There was one subject about which they agreed to differ. The subject of sport. Leech loved riding across country and was an enthusiastic fisherman. My father had not the slightest sympathy with field sports, and objected to the cruelty of coursing and the like on principle. "My dear fellow,"

SPORT AMONGST THE CARTOONISTS

said Leech one day to my father, "you really should have a day's fox-hunting, you can't imagine the delights of a burst after a fresh fox with a good field to follow."

"Oh, yes, I can, but when the field keeps to the road I should say they would seriously interfere with the traffic."

"Keeps to the road! nonsense! besides what can we do with foxes unless we hunt them? What can we do with them?"

"Why, shoot them!"

It is notable that the cartoonists who have followed Leech in the comic papers of the last century—and the present—have ridden to hounds. For very many years my dear old friend Sir John Tenniel hunted, and the present principal cartoonist of *Punch*, my friend Mr. Linley Sambourne, has been and still is a daring horseman.

The bloomers disappeared and for a while womankind rested. Then, some twenty years later, there was another attempt "to rise and be for ever free." The "girl of the period" startled London society by her alleged vagaries. The *Saturday Review* was in those days—as it is now—representative of all that was brainy. Mrs. Lynn Linton was a critic and contributor to its pungent pages, and she sacrificed the girl and gave her the title "of the period." All the world—bounded by the limits of the London postal district—was shocked. The ladies expressed their horror of "the girl of the period," and said they would

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have nothing to do with her. They did not want keys and cigarettes. They did not want to be "fast" and slangy. They loved their husbands and hated divided skirts. Some enterprising journalist started a paper called *The Girl of the Period*, but it did not last. The new woman soon was merged in the more conventional kind of femininity. For the moment mere man was safe from denunciation and, consequently, eventual annihilation.

The nineteenth century has passed away, and with the twentieth comes the Triumph of Eve—Eve in Excelsis. There is no blinking the fact that ladies have fought and defeated us. By "us" I mean those poor creatures, the successors of Adam. In the eighteen hundreds, with the exceptions of Miss Evans and the still prolific Miss Braddon, the chief novelists were men. Dickens, Thackeray, Wilkie Collins, Reade, Trollope, Lytton, Anthony Hope Hawkins, and Conan Doyle were quite the most popular, but in the twentieth century who can say with truth that men are still at the head of the romancer's profession? As to the rank and file, to every male I should say there were half-a-dozen females plying the pen of the far-too-ready writer. A spinster emancipated from the traditions of the nursery and the schoolroom is rather a terrible personage when she undertakes to depict "Passionate Brompton" as my poor friend the late George Du Maurier used to call immature impropriety. During the past season

THE SPINSTER NOVEL

novel after novel from pens held by feminine fingers teemed with situations that all French minds desirous of showing their knowledge of the English language would have called, and properly called, "quite shocking." The realism of Zola which proved a bar in the eighteen hundreds to his universal appreciation in the British family circle was surpassed, and many lady writers seemed to think that a woman to be led to the altar in perfectly fit position for wedlock must have had an experience of the most peculiar and unconventional character. Some of the scenes depicted were shocking, if not absolutely convincing. They would have been fearfully unfit for circulation amongst our sisters, cousins and aunts if they had not been supremely ridiculous. Quite the best comic books of the day have been those written by earnest spinsters revelling in description of drolly impossible dissipation.

"A lady, of course, who wrote that last novel of yours?" I suggested to a publisher friend of mine who rather affects books of a slightly risky character. He nodded his head.

"Married?"

"Of course not. How could a married woman have written chapter twenty?"

Quite true; it wants the virgin mind of a spinster to deal in an astounding, amazing and yet withal an amusing manner with some subjects usually left to the consideration of doctors, lawyers and clergymen.

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Then in journalism ladies are taking, indeed if they have not already taken, the lead. I am anxious not to write a word that may in any way prejudice the chance of a gentlewoman obtaining a livelihood outside the conventional roads to "board, lodging and a miserable pittance" in vogue during the eighteen hundreds. In an earlier chapter I have described the part I took in a discussion held in a leading ladies' club where the subject was the advisability of journalism as a career for women. But I then suggested that the main subject of the debate was lost in an earnest consideration of the sustaining powers of buns. Here, perhaps, I may be permitted to continue the argument. To speak plainly, so far there is little or no jealousy between the sexes—at any rate from the man's side. Hitherto the lady journalist has been welcome to do that part of the work of a periodical that properly belongs—in the mind of the male journalist—to women. Of course a journalist—if he be worth his salt—can adapt himself to any subject. He can describe a battle and, if needs be, a bonnet. But it has been the custom of the calling to leave women's subjects to women. A lady is peculiarly well adapted to the exploiting of a wedding trousseau, or the features of a fashionable ball. The lady writer nowadays mingles with the guests of what the late Lord Beaconsfield used to call "High Society" as an invited guest herself. Even among the *bourgeoise nouveau riche*—if I may coin a name

THACKERAY AND THE REPORTER

for a class—she is treated with more consideration than would be given to a butler or a head ladies'-maid. All this is satisfactory and makes the road of life the pleasanter for her. And the position is not grudged by the other sex because this branch of reporting in days long past had its drawbacks. Thackeray used to tell a story of meeting a reporter at a very fashionable gathering. The great author was giving his coat and hat to an attendant.

"Very glad to see you looking so well, Mr. Thackeray," said a gentleman from the hats' and coats' side of the counter, "very glad indeed."

"Yes, I am very well, thank you," replied Thackeray, taking and shaking the hand proffered to him.

"These little social gatherings are exceedingly amusing and pleasing, Mr. Thackeray, everything is so well done. The band, the singing, the dancing, the supper, are all, to put in a colloquialism, first-rate. They are really very enjoyable indeed. Don't you think so, Mr. Thackeray?"

"Certainly, Mr.——," Thackeray paused to hear a name, but as his smiling interlocutor was silent, continued: "Won't you come upstairs with me and join the company?"

"Well no, thank you, Mr. Thackeray, I can't very well get away from here, in a minute I am off post haste to the office. You see I have to take the names. I hope, Mr. Thackeray, we shall have a very pleasant evening."

"I hope we shall," and with a second shake of

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the hand Thackeray left his humble brother, in the great republic of letters, amongst the hats and coats and went upstairs.

Well, the reporter of the names of the guests did not in the least mind doing his work in the cloak-room. It was business, and in the eighteen hundreds business was emphatically business. Since then there has been a tendency to teach those who will learn the lesson that gentlemen of the Press are gentlemen with the accent on the gentlemen. Cases have been instanced where reporters of the Press, finding no covers laid for them at public dinners, have marched off and left the speeches to the chance of amateur reporting. I am afraid from an editorial point of view that these reporters—if they existed, which is a matter of doubt—were deserving of severe reproof. It was their duty to report. A special correspondent at a seat of war takes his life in his hands, and in the pursuit of his calling becomes regardless of bullets and mines. A reporter sent to “take” the speeches at a public dinner should be equally regardless of something even worse to a high-spirited gentleman than bullets and mines, I mean “cheek.” But still ball reporting is better in ladies’ hands, and so a male journalist was only too pleased to relinquish that branch of his profession without a murmur.

Moving from the newspaper office to a somewhat kindred institution, the theatre, I well recognise the immense change that woman has effected to

PRESS AND STAGE

externals behind the scenes. Before referring to the matter in detail, I may explain why I talk of Press and Stage as kindred institutions. The connecting link were the monks, who some eight hundred years ago were Pressmen in England, as thousands of years earlier their predecessors, the Prophets, were the only chroniclers. I had a slight score anent this fact during the first year of this century. As President of the Institute of Journalists I was taking a leading part at Bristol. The Merchant Adventurers of that ancient City are a branch of the same body who have their headquarters under the more modern title of the Mercers' Company in Cheapside, London. By the way, the Merchant Adventurers is only half of the full name of the ancient organisation.

We were assembled in the noble hall of the Merchant Adventurers at Bristol, where we were holding our debates, and the head of the Adventurers was kind enough to welcome us. He performed the task in some such fashion as the following :—

“ I am glad to see you here,” he said with kindly warmth, “ because, although the Press is a comparatively modern institution, such an old body as the Merchant Adventurers is not afraid to recognise the merits of organisations younger than itself. We are glad to see you, as an old institution welcoming a new.”

Of course I thanked our host for his well-intentioned greeting, but I thought it my duty

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as a member of the Press, and, consequently, a disseminator of useful knowledge, to tell him about the monks and their connection with journalism. I concluded my little speech somewhat as follows :

“ I thank you, sir, most heartily in the names of all journalists, from the monks of yesterday to their successors, the members of the Institute of Journalists of to-day. But personally it is particularly pleasant for me to recognise your kindness as I speak to you in a certain sense as the head of the family. You have given only half of your ancient title. Will you allow me to supply the remainder ? Your company, sir, was called after a very hard-working journalist, and, indeed in every way eminent man who lived in the twelfth century. I still deplore—with many others—the barbarous death which put an end to a career already illustrious, which might have been even of greater use to his country if it had been allowed to be prolonged. May I remind you, sir, while renewing my thanks to you and your excellent and hospitable Guild, that the full title of your Society is the Merchant Adventurers of St. Thomas à Beckett ! ”

And then I sat down amidst (as the reporters had it) a tribute of “ cheers and laughter.”

To return to the theatre. Not very long before his lamented death, my friend the late Clement Scott wrote or rather allowed himself to be interviewed concerning the stage as a profession for women. The article in which his opinions were

THE MORALS OF THE THEATRE

embodied created a very profound impression. All sorts and conditions of theatrical folk were loud in their condemnation of what they insisted were misrepresentations of "behind the scenes." It was said that Clement Scott declared that no lady could maintain her position and be worthy in every respect to become a gentleman's wife who took to the stage. Those were not exactly the words but I believe I have caught the meaning of the assertion which gave so much offence. Well, of course, if Scott made such a sweeping assertion, he was wrong. From the time of the old mystery plays until to-day there have been the best of people actors and actresses. The great majority of "the Profession," as they call themselves, are sincerely religious. So far as the men are concerned this is not surprising, as the best traditions of the calling come down from the monks, the earliest British actors. Of course the actresses cannot claim the same advantage, as female performers are of comparatively recent creation. Until long after the time of Shakespeare boys played the part of females, as women on the stage were unknown. When they did appear unfortunately the play of the period was that of the licentious restoration. Women came on to the stage at the time when the reaction following on Puritan repression had made our dramatists unusually outspoken and unusually regardless of the proprieties. So actors who had been stigmatized by the Roundheads as "rogues

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and vagabonds" found their female associates being regarded as something even worse. There was a tendency to think badly of women on the stage, and it takes a long time to overcome a tendency. Give a dog a bad name—the rest of the proverb is well known. So everything rather than respect was the tradition for women on the stage. Then during the third part of the last century it became the fashion amongst a class that should have known better to run theatres under the management of ladies who were not their wives. This proceeding, although possibly quite harmless, did not increase the respect of the general public for actresses as a whole. Very likely there was no real harm in what may have been considered a senseless way of wasting money. I remember a friend of mine, who was certainly not a born dramatist, telling me that he could not get a piece taken of his anywhere.

"I have visited every London theatre and they won't listen to me. The only man who gives me a hearing is my family lawyer. I read it to him and he listens professionally, and he charges for it in his annual bill of costs ?

"But how does he manage that ?"

"Oh, he treats it as a consultation. I read him my play, and he listens to it professionally to see if he can advise me to cut any of it to save myself from the chance of a trial for libel."

"But is there anything libellous in it ?"

"No, I don't think so, because nothing can hurt

THE LADY THEATRICAL MANAGERESS

anybody nowadays, as the time of the play is laid in the reign of James the First. But one can't be too careful."

As a member of the Bar I agreed with him.

The piece was ultimately produced and was not particularly successful.

In the eighteen hundreds numbers of theatres were run under the management of ladies no doubt of the highest respectability, but still there were stories about the establishments over which they presided which were not entirely satisfactory to husbands and fathers having wives and daughters desirous of adopting the stage as a profession. Very frequently I have been called upon for my advice as one who, having been a dramatist and a critic, must of necessity know all about it. I have always been inclined to discourage ladies from putting in an appearance on the stage.

"You don't know how good I am as *Lady Macbeth* or *Juliet* or *Lady Teazle*. And as for my *Lady Grace Harkaway* in 'London Assurance' at Pork Regis-upon-Bacon—you know Lady Hogg's place in Pigshire—I was simply immense."

"I do not doubt it for a moment, dear lady," I reply.

"Then why shouldn't I get an engagement at His Majesty's, or the St. James's, or Drury Lane?"

"Well, for one reason because engagements at those admirably conducted temples of the drama are not to be obtained by the asking."

"Then what do you advise me to do?"

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"Well, nothing."

"Not go on the stage at all?" asks my interviewer in a tone of sad entreaty.

"Well, I really don't think you would like it."

"But do tell me how I ought to set about it."

"You oughtn't to set about it at all. But if I must tell you the ropes, I would advise you to join some country company playing in safe provincial towns. I mean by safe, towns having audiences who will not show their displeasure by pelting the actors and actresses with cabbage stalks."

"Oh, dear! Well, what then?"

"Well, you may get a pound a week if you find your own clothes and certainly have a lot of practice. Any amount of study."

"Oh, I shan't mind that."

"No, of course. But I don't think you will care for the way you will be treated by the lodging-house-keepers in the towns in which you stay. Many people of this class have (no doubt) unreasonable dislike for those they call 'theatricals.' But you might get over that, but it is just possible you may find some of the ladies and gentlemen of the company rather free-and-easy and scarcely using the excellent English of Lady Vere de Vere."

"That won't matter much—will it?"

"Doubtless not, but some ladies consider such companionships as an acquired taste."

THE STAGE AS A PROFESSION FOR LADIES

"Well, if I didn't like it, I could shun the companionship."

"I'm afraid not. You mustn't give yourself airs on any account. Then really you would find—so far as I am able to judge—life a burden to you. No doubt the ladies and gentlemen are excellent people, but only a little free-and-easy, still you can try it."

Then perversely my lady, having had enough of my warnings, would take her departure thinking I was unduly prejudiced.

Well, perhaps, I may be. Nowadays the lady manageresses to whom I have referred have disappeared and numbers of ladies join theatrical companies and, so to speak, keep one another in countenance. The best proof, perhaps, that the stage of to-day is quite free from offence is the fact that in the play-bills you see the names of daughters of some of our most popular playwrights. From the prices their fathers get for their pieces there can be no compelling pecuniary reason for their appearance. No, I think we may take it that they like the stage as a profession and adopt it knowing that they will be as free from insult as if they were in the Park, or at a ball in the selectest house in Eaton Square. I know that the daughters of many of my friends have tried "walking on" the stage and I have been assured that no discomfort has arisen from the practice. Of course the managements of the Kendals, the Alexanders, the Beerbohm Trees, and others are

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absolutely without reproach. I mention only a few, but I believe that the same good tone prevails in the London theatres without exception.

Still—what a curse is obstinacy!—I prefer for ladies journalism, typewriting, anything rather than the stage. No doubt my judgment is influenced by the fact that I am an exceedingly bad actor. For one thing, the training is sufficiently hard to make only an enthusiast persevere. Like the effect of training in a convent, the novice who still likes her work and has a vocation after three years' trial is pretty sure to be happy to the end of the chapter. A born actor or a born actress must act if she can get the opportunity. In like manner, a born journalist must be a journalist in spite of every temptation to adopt another calling. The perfume of the playhouse and the printing machine act like a charm upon some people. My grandfather loved writing, so did my father, so do I, and so does my son. Writing—like cricket—runs in the blood of some families. I was never intended for a journalist, but printing-ink blood will out. So if a man or a woman will act, why they will. Of one thing, however, I am quite sure. The danger my friend the late lamented Clement Scott wrote of no longer exists. Of course there are scoundrels all the world over, but I honestly believe that a young lady on the stage nowadays is as safe from insult as if she were in her own drawing-room. Nay more, if all is to be believed that one hears about certain “goings

THE CURSE OF "RESTING"

on" in Society, even safer. But having said this I must add a warning. Like the profession of a nun or a sister of charity, the calling is not lucrative. Some little while ago I was talking to a friend of mine—now unhappily dead—about play-acting as a profession for men.

"You have been pretty successful," said I.

"Not at all," was the immediate reply. "Since I left the Service I have spent only about a third of my time on the boards."

"Oh, come, you were receiving twenty guineas a week."

"Yes, once upon a time. But now I can't get that, and I don't like to take less. My friends the managers say, 'So sorry, but I have not a part that will suit you,' meaning that they can get someone for less money."

"But, my dear fellow, you surely have had many more engagements than men with your education and position have usually secured."

"Quite true, and yet I consider the stage a rotten profession. It is so awfully insecure. You can't be sure of an engagement. I have been 'resting' for the last three years. At any hour I may get another chance and be in harness until the company to which I belong is broken up. The only way to get continuous employment is to build a theatre and act in it oneself. I repeat, the stage is a rotten profession. Rotten, rotten, rotten!"

And yet this gentleman was, in the estimation of the play-going public, one of the most successful

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of *jeûn premiers*, and if the stage is not profitable to men, I fear that it may be equally profitless to ladies.

Still, I think that so many girls of good family take to the boards nowadays that we may consider that Eve is to be found more or less *in excelsis* in the playhouse.

I believe that most of the ladies who take to the stage are in grim earnest to make a living. Those whom I have the honour of knowing are certainly not influenced by vanity. There is plenty of scope for "showing off" in amateur theatricals and similar entertainments. Since the commencement of the century there have been less of the charity performances for popular hospitals which were the curse of the regular actors and not the blessing of the noble institutions for which they were nominally organised. As a rule, the expenses mounted up to nearly the whole of the receipts—happy the hospital that realised a five-pound note, and when the total reached two figures the bells should have been set ringing in token of rejoicing. Acting in amateur theatricals was merely a display of vanity. For years the poor theatrical proprietors—especially in the country—had to bear this unfair competition. However, it has gone out. The amateur is not satisfied with an audience of friends, she must have the real thing. And if she really enjoys the calling, why, *soit*. This is a free country, and a lady of refinement and education must have a beneficial influence

A NATION OF SHOPKEEPERS

upon all whom she comes across. The stage should be the finest and most intellectual profession in the world. Perhaps some day it may become so, if it has not already reached the suggested ideal.

And if the ladies will seek for a living in grim earnest, they will turn their attention to other branches of bread-securing. In the olden time there was a strong objection to trade. In one of Buckstone's comedies, produced in mid-Victorian days, a marked distinction was made between wholesale and retail transactions. To be a banker was quite correct, but to keep a pawnbroker's shop was the reverse of respectable. The introduction of the Limited Liability Acts have marked a vast revolution in public feeling. Napoleon called us a "nation of shopkeepers," probably quite overlooking the fact that, if not quite accurate, his statement was at least prophetic. Every shareholder in every company of limited liability is a shopkeeper. When large hotels were opened for the first time, John Leech, always ahead of the moment, produced a cartoon in which a duke in his coronet was carving the joint, and other members of the House of Peers were actively engaged as waiters. By this drawing Leech called attention to the fact that titles were plentiful on the Board of Direction. Quite true, and since that day there has been nothing *infra dig* in strawberry leaves in gold superintending strawberry leaves from the kitchen garden. This

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introduction of the peerage into the direction of hotels was the edge of the wedge. Since then the City has been deluged with the invasion of the aristocracy.

But Eve has gone one better than Adam. So far the mere man has contented himself with holding shares, or if desirous of increasing his income, has become a "guinea pig." Eve has absolutely "started on her own." A generation ago man-millionaires were anxious to make gentlemen and ladies of their sons and daughters. Mr. Mantalini took an active share in the business and even desired "madame" to be neither seen nor heard. Now, Mantalini's customers enter into open competition with him. It is quite the smart thing to-day to run a bonnet shop or an establishment where robes can be fitted while you wait. All this comes from the admission that there is no shame in being hard up. The only danger ahead is whether Lady Millicent will be strong-minded enough to forbid credit. When the co-operative stores were started the movement was bitterly opposed by the West-End shopkeepers. I remember the start of the Civil Service Stores and the rapid development of the system of co-operation that immediately followed upon their establishment.

Once upon a time it was the man who did most of the work, now it is the woman. For years now there have been excellent women clerks in the Post Office, capital nurses, and splendid servants.

THE PRESS BAZAAR

One of the signs of the times is the rapid disappearance of the flunkey and the substitution of Mary Jane for John Thomas. It is well known that in the most exalted quarters domestics nowadays are usually women instead of men. The other day I was in a large undertaking under the especial patronage of Royalty which was run from first to last by ladies and their less exalted sisters. It was the tradition that women never did things thoroughly. That they would not succeed as composers, clerks or organisers. Nothing could be further from the mark. Once let a lady take a matter in hand and her energy is simply wonderful. There was a case in point a few years since in the matter of the Press Bazaar. The London Hospital was greatly in need of funds, and a benevolent lady—the wife of the editor of an important evening newspaper—determined to do her best to pull the institution through its difficulties. I had the privilege of watching the successful endeavour she made to carry her wishes into effect. She called upon me and told me her set plan. It was to get the entire Press to combine in the cause of charity.

“An admirable notion,” I replied, “but I am afraid you will find it impossible. Proprietors of newspapers are the best people in the world, but yet I think they would be reluctant to work in unison.”

I instanced the slow growth of that capital organisation, the Newspaper Society, which for

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about half-a-century was confined to the provinces and only of late years had absorbed London. There is no use ignoring the fact, there is a certain jealousy between town and country.

But it was pointed out to me that this was to be a town matter. The charity to be benefited was the London Hospital, and only London papers were to be approached. The kind-hearted lady was eloquent in her description of the needs of the institution she proposed to benefit. The necessity was very real indeed. I believe I had the honour of helping her to get a hearing with the proprietors of a paper with which I was then very intimately connected. The proprietors, I knew, took the deepest possible interest in hospitals, especially those devoted to children. The start made, the scheme progressed successfully. It was not very long before I received a circular reporting progress. A meeting was to be convened in the Hotel Cecil to consider the advisability of holding a huge bazaar. I found my good Lady Bountiful in the chair. There were some twenty or thirty representatives of important papers present. My good Lady Bountiful asked us to take charge of stalls, or rather those who had wives were to give the command into the hands of their better halves. The men who were present complied without a murmur ; the ladies took control as to the manner born.

The stalls were to belong to the various London leading papers. As a reward for the little help

THE WELLINGTON RELICS

I had been able to afford I was permitted to have a stall as the conductor of a periodical of which I then was the editor, *The Naval and Military Magazine*. When I say I was permitted to have a stall I should suggest the control of our establishment was left in the hands of my better seven-eighths, in other words, my wife. Our good Lady Bountiful, after we had got into shape, asked me what were to be the *spécialité de la maison* of various undertakings. One large paper was to sell books, another jewellery, a third flowers. As it happened, I had heard that a young lady who had very kindly consented to help at our stall knew of some most interesting relics of the great Duke of Wellington, so when we were asked what was to be the leading feature at our establishment we replied "Wellington relics."

"Yes," said our good Lady Bountiful, writing down the description, "can the *Naval and Military Magazine* do anything else?"

"Service comforts," I called out at a venture.

"Very good—Wellington relics and Service comforts. Very good indeed," and Lady Bountiful dealt with the proprietors of the next stall.

I had no idea at the time of the worry this selection of ours would cause. When we came to ask for the Wellington relics that had been promised to us they were not to be discovered. I was at my wits' end. Our good Lady Bountiful with her usual energy had issued circulars giving

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particulars of the various stalls forming the Press Bazaar, and therein were the *spécialités* of the *Naval and Military Magazine*—"Wellington relics and Service comforts." What was to be done? At last I remembered that in a certain Service Club was a stand containing a complete suit of clothes belonging to the Hero of Waterloo. I applied to the Committee and, to my huge delight, was allowed the loan of the case on the condition that I would make myself responsible for its safe return.

The eventful day arrived. The two large halls of the Hotel Cecil were filled with prettily decorated booths having the names of the various periodicals to which they belonged inscribed on facias. Close to the establishment of the *Naval and Military Magazine* was the case (carefully locked) for which I was personally responsible. I was allowed to see the ladies who were kindly assisting in its protection. My wife had organised a staff of ladies connected with the United Service, who were wearing the family medals for this occasion only—very smart indeed. Suddenly the Surveyor of the London County Council arrived. I had had the honour of making his acquaintance when "The Maske of Flowers," originally produced at Gray's Inn, was revived at the Inner Temple. I reminded the Surveyor of the circumstance and he was kind enough to remember it. He invited me to accompany him on a tour through the building. He had come, he told me, to see

AN OBSTRUCTION AT THE PRESS BAZAAR

that everything was safe on behalf of the London County Council.

I paid a hearty tribute of admiration to the L.C.C., and pointed out the many merits of the various stalls. Was not *Punch* with its banners painted by E. T. Read artistic? Could anything be finer than the flowers of the *Morning Post*? Were not the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated* magnificent? Yes, that was the booth of the *Westminster Gazette*. Certainly the wife of the editor was the life and soul of the whole undertaking. I continued my childish, innocent prattle until I came to the booth of the *Naval and Military Magazine*, with its bevy of bemedalled and bescarved lady custodians. My friend, the Surveyor of the London County Council, stopped short as if he were a pointer in front of some concealed partridges.

"What's that?" he asked.

"The stall of the *Naval and Military Magazine*," I replied; "you see, we have the Lady Mayoress _____"

"Yes, yes, very nice; but what's that?"

"Oh, the specialities. Yes, the *Naval and Military Magazine* has its specialities like its neighbours. For instance, those natty little baskets containing half-pints of champagne are Service comforts and——"

"Yes, but what's that?"

"What's what?" I asked, with just the slightest inclination in the world to lose my hitherto heavenly temper.

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"Why, that big bungling affair blocking up that entrance."

"You surely do not mean the Wellington relics ! My dear sir, it is the most interesting exhibit in the whole show. The tin case belongs to the cocked hat you see on the top shelf, and if the great Duke did not actually wear it at Waterloo he——"

"Yes, yes, very interesting indeed, but that big bungling affair can't stay there. It must be removed at once."

I was in despair. It was *the* feature of the whole bazaar. The British public would be furious if they were not allowed to see it. But it was of no good. The stern Surveyor of the London County Council was obdurate. He was bound to do his duty. The case containing the Wellington relics must be removed.

Well, it was removed. Then it was suggested that to keep to the programme until the Royal Party, who were patronising the bazaar, had passed, we should exhibit the contents of the case on the stall counter. It was rather a dangerous experiment, but it was only to be for a few minutes. I remembered that H.R.H. the late Duke of Cambridge was escorting the then Princess of Wales (now Her Majesty Queen Alexandra) and the Princess May round the stalls. The Duke was the head of the British Army, and he was my military chief. It was my duty to please H.R.H., not to disappoint him. So the various articles

WELLINGTON'S BOOTS NOT FOR SALE

were deposited on the stall counter amongst little red devils, silver-framed portraits of signed photographs of generals and admirals, and "Service comforts." We had heaps of military features: Union Jack cushions and (strange to say) bound volumes of the *Naval and Military Magazine*. We were very martial indeed. I noticed the Royalties approaching. The Princess of Wales—now our Queen—looked as kind and as beautiful as ever, and the Princess May was evidently deeply interested. The Duke of Cambridge seemed a little thoughtful. I heard subsequently that H.R.H. had had some trouble in gaining admittance, a stupid constable having insisted on ignoring his identity. However, the Duke with great presence of mind remonstrated in so effective a manner that the head of the police force immediately recognised him.

The Royal party reached the stall of the *Naval and Military Magazine*. Our present Queen, who had been making a number of purchases at the other stalls, looked at the various exhibits and then with a charming smile picked out a photo of the Duke of Cambridge in a silver frame and gave it to the still rather thoughtful head of the British Army. Everything was going charmingly, when suddenly one of the Royal ladies saw the Wellington exhibits and expressed a desire to purchase the boots or the cocked hat of the Hero of Waterloo. An explanation had to be made, that, unfortunately, the Wellington relics were

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not for sale. The Duke of Cambridge was further informed of the facts of the case and conveyed the intelligence to his illustrious relatives. Then he looked thoughtfully at the relics and sauntered on to the next stall, which was now attracting the attention of the kind and beautiful Princess and her charming daughter-in-law.

I am glad to say that, within an hour of the departure of the Royal party, the case containing the Wellington relics was on its road to its proper resting-place. I was very thankful to be able to restore it to its rightful owners intact.

The Press Bazaar was a huge success. Thanks to the efforts of our good Lady Bountiful and the charming and benevolent ladies who assisted her, more than £12,000 was added to the funds of the London Hospital. The arrangements were in the hands of the ladies who later on graciously accepted the services of certain proprietors and editors and other distinguished literary folk as salesmen. Sir William Ingram, Sir Alfred Harmsworth (now Lord Northcliffe), and Sir Francis Burnand all did yeoman service in the cause of charity. I myself felt that I had contributed, so to speak, my mite to the same noble purpose by selling to an old gentleman, seemingly suffering from chronic surprise, a doll dressed as a life-guard, on the plea "that I was quite sure that *this* was what he had been looking everywhere for."

Well, I repeat, the Press Bazaar was a huge

GENTLEWOMEN AS NURSES

success. Everyone connected with it thoroughly enjoyed him or herself. One of the features of the occasion was a little paper printed on the premises. In one of the rooms of the hotel was fitted a press. The boast of the paper was that it had the smallest circulation in the world. It was run for two consecutive days, so I suppose it may claim to have had the shortest life of any daily paper on record. In spite of its brief life it was very lucrative. It was sold for a shilling, and consequently was in strong contrast with the papers subsequently started by Mr. C. Arthur Pearson and Lord Northcliffe at a halfpenny.

Perhaps Eve appears at her best as a hospital nurse. When we remember that Mrs. Gamp was the type of the attendant of the sick not so many decades ago, the sudden change is astounding. And as Queen Alexandra helped the cause of charity at the Press Bazaar so has she helped to establish by her earnest sympathy and helpful patronage the modern sister of charity irrespective of creed. If there were nought else to their credit, the work of the King and Queen in the cause of hospitals and nurses of the sick would hand down their honoured names to a grateful posterity. Nursing has become a new career for the daughters of the house. In the search for food, following the break-up of a household where the breadwinner has been unable to provide for the future, another possible career for a gentlewoman is a boon. Nursing is peculiarly adapted to our

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women. Men may be very gentle attendants, but they lack the gentleness of womankind. But nursing requires the education of a specialist. I cannot help feeling that the learning obtained at Girton or Newnham is not comparable with the lessons learned at a London hospital. It is, no doubt, admirable to have a complete mastery of the dead languages, but is it not better to be able to keep the apparently dying alive? In my eyes the hospital nurse, wearing the neat costume of her calling, has a more bewitching costume than the young girl graduate in her cap and gown. But, of course, I may have old-fashioned prejudices; possibly my opinion is not worth much, as I speak in the character of a "mere man."

According to the poet, "When woman stoops to folly," the consequences are something terrible. But does she ever stoop to folly? Not nearly so frequently as was her wont. The word has gone forth that in the twentieth century the work of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division has more to do with wills and waves than ruined homes. It is no longer fashionable to be wicked by breaking the seventh commandment, as numbered by the authorities of the Anglican Church. Here again I think may be traced the effects of the emancipation of woman—one of the features of the present century. Men are always ready to admire woman and to respect her into the bargain when she gives him the opportunity. When I was training in the chambers of a leader of the Junior Bar in the

A CHANGE IN MORALS

Divorce Division, my master called my attention to this fact.

“Read all those briefs,” said he, “and I don’t think you will find one per cent. where the man has been *ab initio* in fault. A man has an innate respect for a lady, making it impossible for him to make advances unless he receives encouragement. If he has been brought up as a gentleman, his training stands in his way of acting as a blackguard. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred you will find that in *Blank v. Blank and Dash*, Mrs. Blank is the principal defendant. Search for the woman, as the French say, and you will find the clue to solve a difficult divorce mystery.”

And before I had given up practice in the Probate and Divorce Division I had learned that my friend was right. Woman has her destiny in her own hands. If she has not it is a case for the brain specialist.

Then there is another feature of our times which is remarkable from a different point of view. In the eighteen hundreds there was a fashion amongst our youths which has seemingly died out. I think it was the late John Hollingshead who coined the name of “*jeunesse (stage) doré*” for the young enthusiasts—another word for idiots—who waited for the ballet to emerge from behind the scenes of a fashionable theatre. Nowadays that sort of thing has disappeared. It may be that the invasion of the stage by gentlewomen has had a good effect. The managers who employ

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the daughters of their friends to "walk on" take care that the dressing-room shall be free from offence. The morals of the "extra lady" was of no great importance twenty or thirty years ago, but she must be thoroughly respectable nowadays if she is to share the room of a lady born and bred and the daughter of a personal friend of the proprietor of the playhouse. So the "Jackies" and "Mollies" and "Rosies" of the ballet have disappeared, or rather found no successors. The heroines of "the first row" on the stage and the best horses in the other Row of Hyde Park have married into the classes from which they sprung. No doubt they are nowadays the aged wives of the smallest of small publicans, the pettiest of shopkeepers, and the hardest-working of hard-working artizans. The *jeunesse* (stage) *doré* no longer exclusively monopolises the stalls of certain theatres. If he goes as a survivor of the Old Brigade, he finds a very different audience to that to which he was accustomed fifty years ago. There are family gatherings in all parts of the auditorium and he recognises on the stage ladies he has seen hanging on to the arms of his sons going down to dinner in the best houses of his own set.

The chorister of thirty years ago, the ballet of fifty, has ceased to exist. The ladies taking part in the performance are well educated. There is not one of them who cannot play the piano, speak French, and read, write and cipher. "Jackie"

FOLLOWERS OF DRAMA

and " Mollie " and " Rosie " would be quite out of it on that stage. Their occupation is gone. Eve at her worst has been defeated by Eve at her best. And that is a statement that could not have been made until the present day. Good-bye to " Jackie " and " Mollie " and " Rosie "—let it be hoped—for ever. They were at all times an evil influence and sometimes the cause of ruin. It required a stronger personality than a mere man to escape from their baneful clutches—the cruel, heartless harpies, the sirens of the stage.

Eve *in excelsis* on the field of sport. In the eighteen hundreds her sole claim upon the admirers of athletes—male and female—was her exploits as a fox-huntress. And to be a fox-huntress was to possess a horse, or a friend who could supply a mount. Since the close of the last century ladies have made themselves prominent in sport in all directions. They can ride, they run, shoot, play cricket, football and golf. They are experts at bowls, croquet, hockey and lawn tennis. If duelling were the fashion, they could meet the men with the rapier. Lady Clare Vere de Vere may be fairly dignified, but she would be of little account at a country house if she could not do something more than walk with the guns and take part in *tableaux vivants* and amateur theatricals. And in spite of this love of athletics her brain work has not diminished. According to Wilkie Collins (a busy novelist of the mid-Victorian days) a man could not develop his muscles and his

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intelligence at one and the same time. According to Wilkie Collins a trained athlete was more of an animal than a man. In one of his romances—I think it was called “Man and Wife”—his brute of a hero was well born (the son of a peer), and a graduate of either Oxford or Cambridge. But he had the instincts of a brute in distinction from the instincts of a scholar. Well, this idea of Wilkie Collins does not seem to have gone farther than the man. At the time the suggestion that all well-born athletes were brutes was negatived by the triumphs of the Bench and other branches of “honoured intellectual achievement.” When “old Blues” were found amongst our most clear-headed judges, most learned doctors, most revered divines, it was impossible to label all our retired celebrities of the field, time-expired blackguards. Still to some extent Wilkie Collins had his way. But he never dared to attack women. Perhaps the reason was that thirty or forty years ago there were no girl athletes. The Leech ladies were strong and healthy, could ride to hounds, pull a boat and take a hand at not-too-scientific croquet, but they were not well-trained athletes.

It was George Du Maurier whose admiration was for the giantess, who encouraged ladies to emulate their brothers of the cricket field and towing-path. Well, the new female cult is wholesome. It has but one danger. The muscles may become too highly developed, too firm, too strong. I am sorry to have to say so, because I really do

WOMEN AS POLITICIANS

pray for the perfect equality of the sexes, but I am convinced that the physique of the man is greater than the physique of the woman. Nature will be nature. I believe the doctors are of opinion that a wife will be happier from a physical point of view if she is not so strong as her husband. It seems very old-fashioned to say so, but I really do believe that a wife is better at home looking after the household and the children than in sporting turn-outs and winning games at lawn tennis.

In writing this book of recollections I have been careful not to touch upon politics. It has not been a very difficult task, as nowadays "things are so mixed" that it is never easy to declare one's belief in matters parliamentary. In the old days a man was either a Whig or a Tory, a Liberal or a Conservative, Black or White. Nowadays we discover that there is a sort of political blend which may be expressed in colours by a vague grey more or less of a neutral tint. And it is not what a man thinks that only must be taken into account by the Peers and gentlemen who sit on the front benches in Parliament. The ladies have begun to take notice. I am not at all sure that they are not more in earnest than those to whom they have given the purely courtesy title of "Lords and Masters." In the eighteenth century the difficulty was to get men to go to the polls, and if in the twentieth century the voting is heavier it is mainly due to female influence. I speak not

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without some experience, as for many years it has been my high privilege to act as Hon. Treasurer of a habitation belonging to a political organisation with wide-reaching influence. As an official I have to be present at all the meetings of my habitation and find them attended in the proportion of five ladies to three men. I fear there would be a falling-off in the men were it not that we temper arguments with banjoes. Our idea is that music comes well before discussions of tariff reform and after the discussions are over. As an official of (say) the Sunflower Mission, I could no sooner think of talking politics without coon songs than I would of venturing to come down from Mont Blanc on a motor bicycle.

This idea of the musical-plus-political sandwich has been imitated across the Channel. In the autumn of the year before last I was present at a banquet at Brussels held in honour of the International Press. A leading statesman in a gorgeous uniform was in the chair and was supported by a number of highly-decorated journalists. We commenced a very pleasant dinner. The menu was in every way exceptional. Soup, fish, entrées, and then we came to a stop. We had only got about half-way on our gastronomic journey. Suddenly the Chairman rose from his seat and made an eloquent speech. We charged our glasses and drank to the King of the country. I turned round to enquire after the meat *plat* when a second speaker rose and made a speech longer than his

WOMEN AS SPEAKERS

immediate predecessor's. Again I turned for comfort, or at any rate information, from the waiter. Neither was forthcoming. Speech followed speech in quick succession, barring the way of the *rôti* and the *entremets*. At length I would not remain in ignorance any longer, and I spoke to my right-hand neighbour and asked why the dinner had ceased? Did my right-hand neighbour believe that there had been a disaster in the kitchen?

"Be tranquil," was the reply, "it is our custom. We have our oratory in the middle of the meal. If we did not, none of us would wait for it."

I do not know whether my neighbour was "pulling my leg," but by an association of ideas my thoughts were carried away to some of the gatherings of the Sunflower Mission.

Until the present age set us right we had an idea that ladies could not speak. Of course, I mean in public. From the time of Mrs. Caudle to the present day, ladies have never lost their voices in private. Not speak—why, their stirring addresses are a revelation. There is a somewhat kindred society to the Sunflower Brigade called the Primrose League which can boast a number of the most eloquent of lady speakers. I was consulting a supporter of this excellent institution and asked why it was that there were so many lady speakers? In my opinion they quite outshone the men.

"It is not the fault of the men," said my

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informant ; “ you see, men have to work and all that sort of thing. Now, women have only to think. So they think for themselves and for the men too.”

I fully appreciated the division of labour.

I do not wish “ to give the show away ” (to use a colloquialism) of the Sunflower Mission, but really it would do nothing without the help of the ladies. Our female friends take the greatest trouble to know their humbler sisters, and when found, induce them to become members. Now and again these good ladies are assisted in their excellent work by afternoon teas organised by those who have large houses to receive delegates. On one such occasion I had the honour to welcome some fifty or sixty of my brother members. We had tea, cake and talk. The conversation was to be very “ genteel.” I was having a pleasant chat with a gentleman about the opera and the chances of Caruso singing next season.

“ Did you hear him last year at Covent Garden ? ” I asked.

“ Well, no,” said my political friend, stirring his tea with a spoon, “ what was his name ? ”

“ Caruso,” I replied, “ you know Caruso, the celebrated singer, Caruso ? ”

“ Ah, to be sure, Caruso. I wonder if he can be any relation to Robinson Caruso ? ”

I suggested it was possible. I turned away, when an old servant of ours, having no sympathy with what she terms our “ new-fangled notions,”

THE SUNFLOWER MISSION

asked me a question, "Am I to give that man," pointing to my late companion, "any more cake?"

The Sunflower Mission is going on very well indeed, and those who support it trust that it will have considerable influence at the next General Election. It is highly popular with the classes and the masses. As indeed is the Primrose League.

In conclusion, when we see Woman in the hospital tending the sick, Woman in the field of battle succouring the wounded, then she is at her best. When she does not neglect her household duties we admire her and love her. When she puts down—as she can put down—with a calm smile the vulgarity of the "smart set," and what is more awful the mock swagger of the "imitation smart set," we adore her. When she teaches her sex that a lady can be at once a scholar and a woman, we applaud her. I don't think there is any real rivalry between the sexes—at any rate on the man's side. The time has gone by when a man hoped to marry an absolute fool so that his own comparative folly might remain undiscovered. Husband and wife journey down the road of life together very pleasantly if they both are fairly sensible.

"Is that Mrs. Brown talking to Mr. Smith?" asked Mr. Robinson of his friend Mr. Jones.

"Yes."

"Who is Mrs. Brown when she's at home?"

"A fool."

"And who is Mr. Smith when he's abroad?"

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"A greater fool."

And the conversation pithily sums up the situation.

But the age of women's folly belongs to the last century. With the advent of the twentieth century we have a new and better Eve for a newer and more appreciative Adam. Eve nowadays is bright, clever, well educated, good tempered, charitable, all that she should be. She can dance, sing, write short stories, play the piano, speak half-a-dozen modern languages, and if put to it make her own hats, frocks and puddings. To be "fast" has gone out of fashion, and no lady cares for the vulgarity of the purse-proud mistress of millions. But, above and before all, Eve can marry.

Adam falls on his knees before her and is quite convinced that she deserves this praise. Yes, Eve at the commencement of the twentieth century is *in excelsis*.

CHAPTER XII

ROUND ABOUT PUMP HANDLE COURT

The Personality of "Briefless"—The Bar as a Profession—The Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division—Send-off Dinners—The Opening of the New Law Courts—Memories of Gray's Inn—Sergeant Ballantyne—Lord Russell of Killowen—The Parnell Commission—Hugh Shield—Unveiling the Pitman Tablet at Bath—Waiting for Promotion to the Bench.

MY father, when he was writing for *Punch* and practising at the Bar, adopted the name of Briefless, and the character in his hands became very amusing. There was a touch of pathos in the idea. In all the work from his pen there was a serious side. In the early days of the paper he helped to found, his series of "Songs of the Seedy" and "The Sentimental" have this characteristic. The word "seedy" fifty years ago had a different significance to what it bears to-day. A "seedy swell" was a gentleman whose garments had known better days. It was this poor fellow who wrote sad little poems to his lady-love. One that has always appealed to me, and which I have often quoted, is to a fickle beauty who has thrown him over. He returns her presents one by one until he gets to the last, of greater value than the others. This he explains he cannot return for financial reasons. So he makes the best reparation in his power with the line "false deceiver, here's the ticket."

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When I found myself also practising at the Bar and also writing for *Punch* I followed my father's character of Briefless and gave him a son to be called "A. Briefless, Junior." For many years the paper contained the adventures of this gentleman. Later on they were collected and published in a volume by Messrs. Bradbury and Agnew under the title of "Papers from Pump Handle Court, by A. Briefless, Junior." *Punch* in the old days used to make a feature of series. The best known and most popular were "The Caudle Lectures" of Douglas Jerrold. Then another set founded upon the same idea, "The Naggletons," was written by Shirley Brooks. The last series was severely handled by George Augustus Sala in a leader in the *Daily Telegraph*, when he talked of "a brute of a man and a fiend of a woman." "G.A.S." discovered the blemish in "The Naggletons." Unlike "The Caudle Lectures," wherein Mrs. Caudle was always made to find her husband much better than she had expected, "The Naggletons" were "brute and fiend" to the finish.

In my sketch of "A. Briefless, Junior" I tried to show that the poor practiceless barrister was a thoroughly good fellow, and although frequently unfortunate, was always a gentleman. The subjects I selected were from my own experience at the Bar. For a short while when I was attempting to combine editing with practice at the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division, I had many

EARLY STRUGGLES IN CHAMBERS

amusing adventures. The jokes were all against myself, and I discovered the secret that there is no better jest than one that turns the laugh not against others but against yourself. "A. Briefless, Junior" was always coming to grief, and for that reason the British public appreciated him. Pity is akin to love, and my supposed member of the Bar was certainly "pitiful." I shall never forget the first visit I received when I had chambers in Temple Gardens. I believed that the gentleman ushered in to me was anxious to employ me, and was greatly chagrined to discover at the end of our interview that he was a bagman "travelling" in books. He wanted me to become a subscriber for some colossal work which was being published in monthly parts at a guinea a copy! Then there was my *viva voce* examination in the Hall of Lincoln's Inn, where the examiner in recognition of my years insisted that I must be going to practise in India. To conciliate him I suggested that the notion should have favourable consideration.

My call to the Bar was an afterthought. It will be seen by those who have done me the honour to read the pages that have preceded the present one under perusal, that my career has had its changes. First intended for the Church, then a Civil Servant, then an editor, then a secretary, private and public, then a journalist, dramatist and novelist. I had had always a reverence for the legal profession. My father, my grandfather and three of my uncles had belonged to it, and my

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elder brother had eaten his dinners in Lincoln's Inn. So I thought I would have a shot at it. I was a few years under thirty, and it was a long time since I had left school. Since my eighteenth year I had had little time to think of anything outside my daily work. I rather feared the preliminary examination. Of course, I knew any number of members of the Bar. My friend Sir Douglas Straight was a standing counsel for the Treasury, and then there were Inderwick, Sir John Holker, and Serjeant Parry. The last had conducted a case against the *Glow-worm* when I had been its editor and dramatic critic. I had become so impressed with his genuine kindness and strict sense of honour—he used to return his briefs if he could not attend to them in person—that I felt inclined to ask his advice. By chance I ran across the late Mr. Inderwick and appealed to him.

“Certainly, why not?” was the reply to my question, should I go to the Bar? “There is plenty of practice waiting for those who like to seek for it. Look at my own division. We are thirsting for juniors.”

“I know Bayford of your division. He was at school with me at Kensington.”

“Well, then, get called and then try to induce him to let you have the run of his chambers. He has the pick of the junior work at our Bar.”

Then I went to Sir John Holker. He thought very well of the idea and suggested I should join Gray's Inn.

“ EMINENT ATTAINMENTS ”

“ It was your father’s Inn and I am a member. We have rather fallen off in numbers of late years but we are the most sociable men of the Bar ! ”

So I was duly entered at Gray’s Inn and began to keep my terms. I dreaded the preliminary examination, but this difficulty was surmounted. At the suggestion of Sir John Holker, I presented myself before Sir Peter Edlin and refused to be examined. I shall never forget the look of surprise on the face of the worthy examiner when I made the announcement. Sir Peter for a moment, I believe, thought I had lost my senses. When I explained that not only did I refuse to be examined but requested him to be so kind as to give me a certificate of refusal, he stared at me.

“ What do you want with such a certificate ? ”

“ To present to the Benchers of my Inn. I shall claim exemption on the score of my attainments.”

Then I explained what my career had been since leaving Felstead. How I had done this and that and t’other. I was astonished to find that the list was really very imposing. Sir Peter became most kind and courteous and immediately complied with my request.

I subsequently forwarded my refusal to the Masters of the Bench, and they were kind enough to consider my attainments sufficient to excuse me from a preliminary examination. Later on I discovered that I need not have been so terribly alarmed at the guard to the passage of the Bar. I saw one or two of the papers, and came to the

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conclusion that a very moderate amount of "rubbing off the rust" would have been sufficient to pass the examination. But, although I was exempted from the preliminary, I had, of course, to pass professional tests, and made the acquaintance for the first time of that amusing compiler, Justinian, that light-hearted commentator, Joshua Williams, and other authorities on Roman Law, Real and Personal Property, Common Law and Equity. It was only the other day that I met a learned judge in Jamaica who foregathered with me to talk over our forensic triumphs—we had been called in the same term.

The appeal to my friend R. A. Bayford, K.C., was successful, and I had the pleasure of being in his chambers with another of my friends, Mr. Barnard, K.C., the present (1906-7) Treasurer of Gray's Inn. It was my great delight to make my appearance in wig and gown and bow to the judge on his arrival in the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court. My special leaning was naturally towards the two former of the subjects, as I knew very little of the Admiralty side. In the hours of relaxation I sometimes went to a function of a convivial character. One of these was the send-off dinner to a popular celebrity on the occasion of his acceptance of a judgeship in India. Sir Edward Clarke was in the chair and (as usual) made an admirable speech. When the loyal toasts were honoured, the Chairman called upon Sir

A SEND-OFF DINNER

Peter Edlin to return thanks for the Royal Family, as he was the Assistant-Treasurer of the Middle Temple, of which for that year H.R.H. the Prince of Wales was Treasurer. Sir Peter was equal to the occasion, although the call came upon him as a surprise. He rose in his seat with great dignity and made a very appropriate response.

About that time, Sir Douglas Straight, then (as now) one of the most popular of men, had any number of send-off banquets. At one of these convivial gatherings "F.C.B." presented him, on behalf of those present, with a magnificent trophy of plate. Sir Francis said the donor of the gift wished to remain anonymous, but using his discretion he desired to say that the giver was "Johnny Toole." Our poor friend, who only died a few months since, accepted the responsibility. Yes, he did desire to preserve his *incognito*, but he would bow to the wishes of those assembled. The collection of plate, he was bound to confess, was certainly handsome, he might say, very handsome. It might compare, perhaps, not unfavourably with the magnificent collection of a kindred character which millionaire magnates of the East possessed. Our friend Straight was going amongst those wealthy magnates, and it was desirable that a British judge should hold his own amongst our swarthy fellow-subjects. In conclusion he said "Here, my dear friend, is my little present at parting. I am very glad—encouraged by the support of Burnand—to offer

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it to you for your acceptance. All you have now to do is to take it ! ” There was wild applause, but Straight was unable to comply with Johnny’s kind suggestion. The trophy had been supplied by the caterers of the banquet and belonged to Messrs. Spiers and Pond.

With F.C.B. I was present at the opening of the Law Courts when my friend’s wig was certainly of a darker colour than my own. It was then I heard the voice of the late Queen Victoria when she read her reply to the loyal address presented to her by her loyal subjects belonging to the legal profession. Nothing could have been clearer and more musical than the voice of her Majesty. I had got some extra cards for friends who were placed in a room overlooking the Strand. By some mistake they got locked in, and were very nearly kept prisoners for a considerable time. Fortunately a messenger, hearing a vigorous knocking, found the dilemma in which my friends had been placed. Evidently a Scotchman, he was reluctant to assist them to escape. They might have been locked in for some good reason. His caution reminded me of the story of a gentleman of the same nationality who, finding a visitor in the Chamber of Horrors who had accidentally placed his head in position for the descent of the knife of the guillotine, refused to come to the rescue.

“ You may be,” said he, “ part of the show ! ”

Then, quite recently, I had the honour of being

THE RENAISSANCE OF GRAY'S INN

present when our new Common Room was opened. Mr. Barnard, the Treasurer, told of the rapid strides in favour made by the Inn in recent years. I was entirely in sympathy with him, for when I was called there was but one brother student to accompany me to accept the congratulations of the Benchers.

The Treasurer directed attention to the greatly increased number of students who had entered at Gray's Inn in recent years. He could not account for it. I think I might have made a suggestion. "The Maske of Flowers," to which I have more than once referred in these pages, certainly marked the date of the Renaissance of Gray's Inn. The Press was full of our revival, and from that time a steady progress was made in the renewed prosperity of the Honourable Society. And I am bound to say that those who enter at Gray's love the old house with a fervour only equalled by the *Alumni* of Eton, Winchester and Westminster, and perhaps I may be permitted to add, Felstead and All Hallows. The reason for this *esprit de corps* is easily found. The members of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn are a happy family. The benchers and the barristers meet a few minutes before hall and fraternise. Members of Gray's may have chambers in other Inns and even be members of those other Inns *ad eundem*, but I venture to suggest that their hearts are in Holborn. I remember once discussing the question of the works of Shakespeare being written

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by Bacon. The three other members of the Bar Mess were loudly in favour of the claims of the conventional Bard of Avon.

“ I can convince you,” I said, “ that you are wrong, and that Bacon was most probably the ghost which inspired the works of the immortal William.”

“ Impossible,” was the reply, “ impossible.”

“ Was not Bacon a member of this honourable society ? ”

“ Certainly.”

“ Then is it not possible, nay, probable, that Bacon, as a member of Gray’s Inn, wrote the works of William Shakespeare ? ”

My colleagues of the Mess admitted that much, very much, might be said in support of the contention.

My practice in the Probate Division was not extensive, but sufficient to keep me in bands and other forensic necessities. On one occasion I had the honour of conducting a case in the absence of my leader, the late Mr. Waddy. Mr. Inderwick led for the other side, and having other work to do, allowed his junior to act for him. It was equalising the chances of both plaintiff and defendant. I had to support a Will against all comers, and very early in the case came to the conclusion that the defendant must have been suffering from a well-known symptom of insanity—“ exaltation of ideas.” He told his workmen (he was a stonemason) that he had a contract to rebuild the Pyramids.

EXALTATION OF IDEAS

Then he was going to make a bridge from London to New York. In the interests of my client I had to assume that he was fond of practical joking and that these yarns were only amusing exaggerations.

"Was not the testator a man of great wit?" I asked a rather foolish witness who had been one of the stonemason's *employés*.

"Not that I have heard of, sir. He was better with his fists than his tongue, as the saying goes."

"You understand slang. Now, come, did he not like pulling your leg?"

"No, sir, he would rather break my arm. He did once nearly, when he caught me one with a crow-bar."

"But, now—on your oath—when he told these amusing stories about rebuilding the Pyramids, etc., etc., wasn't there a twinkle in his eye?"

"I never looked at his eyes; I was always keeping out of the way of his boots. Oh, he *was* a nice one!"

"Quite so, I understand; a nice, pleasant, cheery fellow. You never fell out with him?"

"Only when we both went tumbling down the stairs together, when he gave me a push, lost his balance, and tumbled after me. Oh, he was a *nice* one!"

"Quite so; and you were very sorry when he died?"

"Not me."

"But the neighbours regretted his loss deeply?"

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“ Well, they didn’t show it much.”

In spite of this rather unsatisfactory witness, I won my case. The jury took my view of the “ merry mind ” of the testator and gave me a verdict. It was at this point that the solicitors for the other side hurried post haste after Inderwick and brought him into court. There was a battle royal over the costs. I wished to save my client from having to pay anything. This was rather extra-conscientious, as when there is an estate available it seems to most lawyers right and proper to draw upon it. However, my friends of the Junior Bar supplied me with hints on Case Law. To every authority quoted by my “ learned friend ” Inderwick I had an apt rejoinder. In the end I deprived the other side of costs, and in the robing-room in Carey Street received Inderwick’s hearty congratulations. No professional jealousy in Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty, but great good fellowship. We should have liked to have seen Inderwick on the Bench, and when someone was chosen in his place I went for his Lordship for all I was worth. I was editor of the *Sunday Times* at the moment, and that powerful organ of public opinion became for the nonce nothing if not forensic.

Another distinguished literary member of the Division was my good friend Mr. Rider Haggard. When I was staying at Harrogate as the guest of Mr. Beckett (now Lord) Faber I met Mr. Haggard. It was the occasion of my year of office as President,

"THE BECKETT NOT À BECKETT"

either of the Newspaper Society or the Institute of Journalists, and we had a host in common. I remember that when proposing Mr. Beckett Faber's health I asked the audience to remember that our host "was the Beckett, not à Beckett," a small pleasantry which was greatly appreciated. One evening during our visit, Mr. Haggard explained to me from midnight until about three in the morning the reason why the toilers had left the land. Although I paid the greatest possible attention to my friend's explanation, I am not at all sure that I quite grasped the situation. I rather fancy the reason why farm labourers and labouresses leave the country for town is to go to the music halls. With less serio-comic we should have more turnips, and the absence of provincial theatres would be distinctly advantageous to "roots." That is the idea I received, and I trust it is correct.

Besides my regular work in the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division, I used to dabble a little in Chancery. I happened to be interested in a suit of my own and naturally took a personal interest in the action. If I were ever to find myself a Member of the House of Commons, I think I should like to "back" a bill reforming this part of the law's machinery. No doubt Dickens showed up long litigation in "Bleak House," but there are still cases before the Court nearly as long. The one in which I was and am interested began more than twenty years since,

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and is still going strong. We came to "further consideration" and paid costs and the suit is only kept alive for the purpose of audit. In this wonderful suit the clerks of the solicitors have grown old. I have seen a boy arrive at the office, be sent to argue our suit before the Master, and by degrees rise to the important post of managing clerk. If all things failed, and I could bring myself to submit to be disbarred, I believe I could make a really very excellent managing clerk. Nowadays on the Chancery side members of the Bar have not much to do. All the real work of the Equity Courts is in the hands of the Junior members of the profession. When an estate is nearly bankrupt the law permits the service of a barrister to be secured to see that the corpse is properly buried. However, somehow after the custom of Englishmen, both classes of the profession manage to exist.

Perhaps the most amusing member of the Bar I had the pleasure of meeting was Serjeant Ballantyne. He was an *habitué* of Evans', a place of meeting which has no successor to-day. The life and soul of the place was Paddy Green, an old actor who had nearly as intimate an acquaintance with past London as the late Sir Walter Besant himself. At Evans' there used to be a *Punch* table, and later on a *Fun* table, at which the staffs of those famous periodicals used to foregather and talk over the events of the day. It was, I imagine, the nearest approach to the old coffee-houses of

SERJEANT BALLANTYNE

the eighteenth century, as it was possible to reach a century later. The rooms were used by many sets. At one table would sit the comic journalists, at another the lights of the Bar, at a third the leaders of commerce. I frequently met Serjeant Ballantyne at Evans', and never found him without a good story. He was famed for his good things. A well-known silk had been swaggering about the rank and fashion that had attended the marriage of his daughter.

"I give you my word, sir, there was a row of carriages from one end of the street to the other."

"Ah, you must live opposite a cab stand," drawled out Ballantyne.

A story is told of a young man of fairly good estate who had got into the hands of a lady of the ballet who wished to organise a ball in the young man's London house. The event came off. All the men about town were invited, and the lady of the ballet asked a number of her friends and companions to meet them. A card of invitation was sent to Ballantyne.

"I am afraid I can't come as I have another engagement for the same evening," wrote the Serjeant. "I am very sorry ; the more especially as I knew your father."

Then there was Sir Charles Russell, who subsequently became, as Lord Russell of Killowen, Lord Chief Justice of England. He was a great friend of Sir Francis Burnand, and the first time

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

I met him was at the Garrick Club, at a dinner at which the then Editor of *Punch*, Sir William Agnew, the late W. Bradbury, Sir John Tenniel, Colonel Burnaby, George Du Maurier, and others were present. I had the good luck to sit near the Chief Justice that was to be, and had a very good time. We talked of many things, but chiefly about sport, of which I confess I know but little. Still I managed to hold my own, and somehow or other impressed upon Sir Charles the fact that I was an expert in field sports. I am afraid the impression was conveyed by my assent to all my neighbour said and, so to speak, allowing him to do all the talking.

Some years afterwards, when I met Sir Charles on the Press boat following the race between the rival Blues, he singled me out to be his guide, philosopher and friend. I had to explain the progress of the contest. I had, of course, been to many University boat races, but this was the first time that I had followed in the Press steamer. However, I got out of the difficulty fairly well. Sir Charles supposed this and supposed that, and I agreed with him. In spite of his powers as a cross-examiner he never discovered—so far as I could judge—that I knew as little about boat-racing as he did himself.

It had been my mania to be present at the Parnell Commission, where I saw Russell of Killowen. A card of invitation to attend the enquiry had been sent to the *Punch* office, and my

THE PARNELL COMMISSION

friend and editor, Sir Francis Burnand, had handed it to me. When I first appeared there was some difficulty in obtaining a seat, as there was a rush for the places reserved for the Press. I fancy that my *confrères* of the Fourth Estate considered that the Parnell Enquiry was too serious a matter to attract the attention of *Punch*. As a matter of fact, I reported the proceedings from week to week, for a number of months, and never was at a loss for subjects. I was present at the never-to-be-forgotten cross-examination of Pigott, the forger of the incriminating letters about which so much was said. It was a painful moment when the miserable wretch—he subsequently committed suicide—was brought to book and had practically to confess the imposition.

“Are you not ashamed of yourself?” sternly asked Sir Charles.

Pigott, who had been attempting to laugh with the audience when their bitter merriment was directed against him, then to bluster, then to whimper, here fairly broke down. It was a very painful moment. That day the man fled to Spain, where he shot himself. On his body was found the scapular, testifying to his belief in a hereafter.

It was a very painful moment, and I have known only one scene that approached it in intensity. I refer to the incident of the journalist and the judge. The journalist to whom I refer had been guilty of a libel—it was written by another, but he had published it, and had taken the full responsibility

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

of its appearance—and the judge, to use the slang of the day, “went for him.” I never heard anything in my life so bitterly cruel as the address of that judge to that journalist while sentencing him to imprisonment. Although the journalist was no great friend of mine, I felt inclined to stand by him to help him bear the burden of abuse that seemed too great to be borne single-handed.

When Pigott was bowed down with the unbearable burden of his shame, I felt the same qualm of pity. I felt inclined to stand beside him. As a matter of fact, I was sitting behind him, and Mr. Sydney Hall, the artist in black and white, gave a sketch of the two in the *Graphic* of the period.

Then, towards the end of the proceedings of the Parnell Commission, came the magnificent oration of Sir Charles Russell. The peroration was so grand and so touching, that there was a burst of enthusiastic cheering when Sir Charles sat down. The President of the Commission, whose political opinions were directly in opposition to those of Sir Charles, sent round to the great advocate a few lines of hearty congratulation.

One of my greatest friends at the Bar was the late Hugh Shield, Q.C., who was not only Resident Benchers at Gray's Inn, but also Bursar of Jesus College, Cambridge. He was one of the Maske Committee in the first Jubilee year when Gray's

HUGH SHIELD, Q.C.

produced the famous "Maske of Flowers" which, I contend, gave the date of its renaissance. He took the greatest possible interest in the proceedings, and had he not been a man with much business on his hands, would have made an ideal Master of the Revels. In the Maske Committee he was my right-hand man and smoothed out all little difficulties. He was of great assistance in hunting up the book for us, and as an acknowledged authority on costume was able to give hints to Lewis Wingfield (brother of Lord Powerscourt), to whom the direction of that department of our work was entrusted. He was immensely popular everywhere, and knew the supporters of the A.D.C. at Cambridge, to which some of our "maskers" had once belonged. As our artist, O'Connor had painted much of the scenery for Tom Taylor's dramas of College life. He knew the late Sir Charles Hall (afterwards Recorder of London) very well, and together we had interviewed the Benchers of the Middle Temple to get special hints on Court etiquette. We found the correct form of addressing Royalty, and in many other ways worked together. By the way, we found that it was customary to supply Royalty with gold chairs, and one of the items in our accounts—and a considerable one—was the charge for these regulation *chaises*. Shield was continually giving me valuable tips. One day he said, while I was filling my pocket-book with memoranda,

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“ I say, Arthur, why have you never learnt shorthand ? ”

“ Because I have never had time.”

“ Well, then, I have the advantage over you. I learnt it years ago, and it has been a great advantage to me during my whole life.”

I thought of this saying of my friend Hugh Shield two or three years later when, as President of the Institute of Journalists, I was invited by the Corporation of the City of Bath to unveil a tablet to the memory of Sir Isaac Pitman, in recognition of his services to the science of Shorthand, which made his system the best in the world. While I have the visit in my mind, I may say that I had a delightful time and a very enthusiastic audience. At the luncheon which followed the ceremony, I told a story which I had heard from someone about Bath and its lottery tickets. The story I have told in the course of my lectures several times, and I have always been doubtful whether it was comic or not. Perhaps I may be permitted to give the tale in this volume of recollections of a humourist to see whether it can be accepted as facetious or the reverse.

A man found himself in Bath in the days before railways had been thought of. He therefore took his place in a public coach. There was no room outside, so he entered the interior, where he found one passenger. His fellow-traveller was a gentleman who seemed to be suffering from toothache, at any rate, he had his coat buttoned up over his

IN THE BATH COACH

ears. He had a slight colour in his cheeks which, however, seemed to be fading away in the course of the journey. Our man found in the stranger a certain fascination which caused him to address him.

“ You seem to be ill, sir. I hope there is nothing the matter ? ”

The stranger spoke with some difficulty, keeping the collar of his coat close to his ears, as if suffering pain. At last he explained that he had bought a lottery ticket which his wife had persuaded him to re-sell.

“ Well,” said the man, “ I see no particular harm in that. After all, the prizes in the lottery are few and far between, although, of course, the first prize is worth £100,000, and consequently your chance was a feeble one.”

The stranger sighed and seemingly grew paler and paler.

“ Besides,” continued the comforter, “ you may be sure that your wife was in the right—women always are.”

Then with great difficulty the stranger explained that the ticket he had bought and re-sold for the price he had paid for it had gained the first prize, £100,000. If he had not taken his wife’s advice he would have been richer by £100,000.

“ My dear sir, my dear sir, what a misfortune ! Considering the facts, I think you take your great ill-luck with wonderful composure. Had such a

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HUMOURIST

thing happened to me, I don't know what I should have done. I really do believe I should have cut my throat."

"Have!"

When I told the story I used to throw open the collar of my coat which, until then, had been kept close to my ears, as if showing the wound. I am afraid this was rather ghastly, but I am bound to say that never have I told the story without creating roars of laughter. At Bath it went splendidly with an audience of the greatest possible respectability. There were clever *litterateurs*, doctors, lawyers, soldiers and sailors, who had gathered to do honour to Sir Isaac Pitman. The little tale went with immense "go." I gave a local colour to the story by suggesting that probably the coach belonged to Mr. Pickwick, the name immortalised by Charles Dickens.

My recollections of the Bar have always been of the pleasantest character. To this day I keep in touch with my old Inn. Nowadays our hall is full of students. When I joined I think I had only one companion, as I had only one companion when I was called to the Bar. It was a great delight to me during my recent visit to the West Indies to be welcomed by the members of the profession in that distant part of His Majesty's dominions beyond the seas. I was proud to hear a complimentary reference to my editorship of my father's "Comic Blackstone" at the dinner given to me at which the Attorney-General took the chair. As I have

WAITING FOR PROMOTION

heard a Lord Chancellor observe, "Once a Barrister, always a Barrister." I have never forgotten my connection with the Bar in spite of the fact that I have never been Lord Chancellor. No, never Lord Chancellor, nor Lord Chief Justice, nor Master of the Rolls—as yet !

CHAPTER XIII

AT THE "PUNCH" TABLE

Old Jokes and New—First and Last Appearance at the *Punch* Table—
A Letter from Sir F. C. Burnand—Past Contributors to *Punch*—
Devotion to the Table—The Call from Bouverie Street—A Summons
to the Almanack Supper—The Seven Ages of Luggage—Vain Regret
—The Palmy Days—1874 to 1902—Farewell.

FROM the first I have been a little nervous about describing myself as a "humourist," as there are so many estimates of humour. This being so, I was extremely gratified to receive the following letter during the compilation of this volume.

THE "STRAND MAGAZINE,"

3-12 SOUTHAMPTON STREET,

STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

24th September, 1906.

DEAR SIR,—

I am printing in the forthcoming number of the *Strand Magazine* an article by a famous American humourist in which he comments on Mr. W. D. Howell's recent statement that "the English are to-day the most humorous and humour-loving people in the world," by saying that as to Mr. Howell's statement "it all depends on what is meant by humour. The English as a whole have far less and a slower perception of a joke than they had fifty years ago. The delicate drollery of Leech, the charming comedy of Du Maurier, the flashing witticisms of Sydney Smith have become obsolete, and the

AN EXPERT OPINION REQUESTED

British public now only laughs at the mechanical flippancies of *Punch*, the *risqué bon mots* of musical comedy, and the pert repartees of Mayfair children and Limehouse bargees."

May I venture to ask you, *à propos* of this, whether you do not from your personal experience regard a keen perception of humour commoner to-day amongst all classes than it was, say, a generation ago? Your opinion as one of our leading humourists, to add to those of Messrs. Jerome, Jacobs, Pett Ridge, Anstey, Guthrie, Walter Emanuel, Frank Richardson, Harold Begbie and Sir F. Burnand, who have already favoured me with their views upon the subject, would go far to defend us from these aspersions, and greatly oblige

Yours very faithfully,

THE EDITOR

(*per E. S. Valentine*).

A. W. A BECKETT, Esq.

I promptly replied to the question contained in this kind and courteous note in the affirmative, and added that my personal professional experience as connected with *Punch* from 1874 to 1903, enabled me to believe that the jokes of fifty years ago were as popular to-day as they were of yore. I suggested that many of the jests of half-a-century since continually re-appeared in the pages of our leading comic paper. Students of *Punch* will find the same amusing notions cropping up continually in their favourite periodical. I remember when I was Assistant Editor of *Punch* that our great difficulty was the exclusion of used jokes. On one occasion Charles Keene, the famous artist in black and white, actually repeated a joke he had used in

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one picture in a second version of the same idea. The strange thing was that none of those who sat at the celebrated round table discovered the coincidence. It fell to the lot of an outsider to call the attention of the Editor to the plagiarism.

My friend and late chief, Sir Francis Burnand—who like Sir John Tenniel and myself no longer take part in the councils of *Punch*—I believe intends to give an exhaustive history of the well-known publication from the inside. From the outside, my friend Mr. M. H. Spielmann, in his delightful “History of *Punch*,” has done much to enlighten the world on the subject. Even I myself, in a little book published some few years ago, and entitled, in recognition of the services of my father, my elder brother and another member of the same family, “The à Becketts of *Punch*,” have added my mite to the story of the same publication. No doubt as time passes we shall have further histories. I was gratified to learn that a son of mine had contributed to the paper, although through some accident—for which the proprietors most kindly and courteously apologised—his name was unfortunately and unintentionally omitted in the Index. His appearance in the pages of the *London Charivari* makes the title of my little volume, “The à Becketts of *Punch*,” even more appropriate, as the family supplied contributors to the third generation. But all these considerations render me desirous of not “over-doing” my

A JUDICIAL OPINION

references to a paper proud of its traditions of Thackeray, Leech, Du Maurier, Burnand, the à Becketts, Doyle, Tenniel, Sambourne, Partridge, and other artists and authors of almost—perhaps not quite—equal genius to those I have mentioned. It is just possible that, had I not received the kind letter from the courteous Editor of the *Strand Magazine* appealing to me personally as “one of our leading humourists,” I should have omitted all reference to *Punch* in these pages. It is a little difficult, when one has been so closely associated in the past and may perhaps—by one’s descendants—be as closely associated in the future, to take a judicial view of the present. The barrister on gaining the Bench returns his briefs, so the Assistant Editor who has left the sanctum in which he did so much work finds it difficult and even painful to appraise the labours of his successors at their proper value. Naturally the bias will be on the side of too much applause, as an honest journalist (and all journalists are honest) will never permit a personal grievance, real or imaginary, to warp his judgment.

During the years that have passed since I dined for the last time at the *Punch* Table, much water has passed under the Pont Neuf. I have had other things to do and to think about since I relinquished my *serviette*, used for so many years at “The Mahogany Tree” which Thackeray rendered so famous. In his admirable, and I should have thought almost exhaustive, “History of *Punch*,”

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Mr. Spielmann now and again gave a plan of the table. As I write these lines on the 29th of September, 1906, I read in my diary of the 29th of September, 1875 (just one-and-thirty years ago to a day) the following entry : “ Date for the production of ‘ Greater than Gold ’ at Sheffield postponed until November. 85th letter to the *Perthshire Advertiser*. In *Punch* as usual, my 71st appearance therein. *Went for the first time to the Punch dinner !!!* I was received most cordially. My health was drunk, and I think I made a very favourable impression. There were present Tom Taylor, Sambourne, F. Burnand, Sketchley and Bradbury. As I said in returning thanks, it was the proudest moment of my life ! “ Hurrah !!! ” On the 4th of June, 1902, referring to my diary, I find the following entry—

“ Attended the *Punch* dinner. Present : F. C. B., Sambourne, Lucy, Partridge, Reed, Raven Hill, Owen Seaman and William Agnew. My last appearance at the *Punch* dinner.” And in its place in my diary I have kept the bill of fare, which I venture to append, as I fancy nothing of the sort has seen the light in either Mr. Spielmann’s “ History of *Punch*,” or my own little brochure, “ The à Becketts of *Punch*,” or any other work on the same subject. It may be interesting to show what the food for the body was that accompanied the food for the mind in Bouverie Street.

THE LAST DINNER IN BOUVERIE STREET

The following may be accepted as a model repast. On a grand occasion—such as *Punch's* Jubilee Dinner—the bill of fare was, of course, more elaborate.

Menu, June 4th, 1902.

Queue de Bœuf Jardiniere.

Creme d'Asperges.

Boiled Salmon—Shrimp Sauce.

New Potatoes, Cucumber.

Roast Saddle of Lamb—Mint Sauce.

Spinach and French Beans.

Asparagus.

Roast Surrey Fowl and Bacon.

Salad.

Gooseberry Tart and Cream.

Marrow-on-Toast.

On the back of this interesting card my friend Mr. Raven Hill has sketched a rough idea for the cartoon. Mr. Arthur Balfour was depicted leading a human document labelled "Education Bill" through what appeared to be a bog labelled "Liberal Opposition." I value the little sketch not only on its intrinsic merits, but as a memento of my last visit to a dinner where I and my father and my elder brother had spent some of the happiest hours of our lives—and hours that

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scores, nay hundreds of letters amongst my family archives would prove to have been usefully employed in keeping up the *prestige* of *Punch*, and consequently maintaining in England the standard of wholesome, innocent and excellent humour.

At the commencement of this chapter I have inserted a letter from the Editor of the *Strand Magazine*, in which I am alluded to as "one of our leading humourists." I at first refrained from giving my answer, as I did not wish to anticipate. But on reflection it occurred to me that no doubt by the time these pages would be published the article to which the Editor referred would have appeared and been—remembered. Under [these circumstances I do not see that I was betraying confidence when I said that in my reply I suggested that the jokes of the *Punch* of to-day were more or less identical with those that appeared half-a-century ago. I have already given instances in which the jests of Charles Keene were repeated unconsciously by Charles Keene. Looking over a number of letters I came across one from Sir Francis Burnand in which he sent me a suggestion to Bouverie Street when I was taking his place there during his holiday. He wrote, "I heard a Charles Keene story which I'll send up to you when I recollect it, which I can't now, and the man who told it has gone out in a small boat fishing. This wouldn't be a bad one, but depends entirely on the drawing : On board yacht—very rough—man at helm—thorough old salt—hirer of yacht

PUNCH JESTS

and friends looking miserable. 'Nice breeze on now, sir.' 'Yes . . . de-light-ful. Capital for yachting—if you're a good sailor.' Nothing new in above—any more than there is in any phase of human misery at which everybody always laughs." How true. Sir Francis Burnand, who, as a comic writer has a longer experience than any man living, put the matter in a nut-shell. A fall, sea-sickness, missing a train, anything painful or irritating is always amusing. As my friend said, "Everybody always laughs." That is the reason no doubt why the jokes of *Punch* so often are repeated.

In his cheery letter from which I have quoted, Sir Francis Burnand concludes, "I think I've now given hints on any important matters, and for the rest it is left in the hands of Arthur à B. and—Providence. Politeness compels me to put A. à B. first." Dear me, how pleasant was my association with my old friend F.C.B. What trouble he used to take with his part in the paper with which he had been so long associated. I may be prejudiced, but even judging from results I cannot help feeling that his departure from the table was premature. It may have been premature in other cases.

Sir F. C. Gould, in a parody of Sir John Tenniel's celebrated cartoon—the subject and details of which were suggested by my brother Gilbert—"Dropping the Pilot," showed F.C.B. leaving the ship to the great regret of poor old *Punch* and dog Toby, and as a man in the street, I think I can say that the sorrow was shared by all who held

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“the sage of Fleet Street” in reverence. Speaking personally, the rather abrupt severance of the tie that bound me to my old friends and associates caused me infinite regret. The letter from which I have quoted showed how my friend was enjoying his well-earned holiday. “I was happy and glorious—lunched and dined. Enjoyed evening, up at 5 a.m., and sailed away for Campbelltown, where we’ve just been on shore and purchased native produce in the shape of warm socks at 1s. 6d. a pair!!! *hand made*. To-morrow we go on to Port Ellen, then to Cronin—(but you don’t know any of these places you MacDuffer—*no more did I*, but I’ve got a *map*) then I shall quit the ship, visit Edinbro’, Stirling, Glasgy, and so home in time for dinner, *i.e.*, *the day before dinner*, and I am, yours truly, F. C. Burnand.” In the palmy days of *Punch*—from 1874 to 1902—what glorious times we had! I am not surprised that we of the Table Round grew to take ourselves too seriously—if “leading humourists” can take themselves seriously. It will be noticed that in my last sentence I am doing my utmost to maintain my reputation as a humourist.

Still harking on the frequent repetition of the same jokes in the *London Charivari*, I may refer to “Punch’s Library of Humour,” which made its appearance in 1906. According to its editor, this work was “designed to provide in a series of volumes, each complete in itself, the cream of our national humour contributed by the masters of

EVERGREEN JOKES

comic draughtsmanship and the leading wits of the age to *Punch* from its beginning in 1841 to the present day." On purchasing "Mr. Punch's Book of Love," I was gratified but surprised (because my consent had not been obtained) to find that an article I had written for *Punch* in 1876 had been reprinted; more than thirty years ago, when, according to the statute, the copyright reverts to the author. I was very pleased to learn that the Editor—quite properly—had recognised me as "a leading wit of the age." And it was delightful to know that my "marriage memories" written and published in 1876 were still the same sort of joke that was expected to convulse the public in 1906. Here was "the cream of our national humour" in perfection. I found on subsequent search into "Punch's Library of Humour" that much more cream of a like excellent quality had been obtained from the same source. And yet I hesitated to call myself a "humourist." I see that I must have been suffering from mock modesty when I doubted the appropriateness of the title. In future editions of this book I might call it "Recollections of a Humourist by a Leading Wit of the Age." It seems to me to be my duty to live up to "Punch's Library of Humour." Under all the circumstances of the case, I am very pleased to give the library a gratuitous advertisement. It is only just, considering that I have written some of it myself. "Jokes of 1876 in excellent condition for the Public of 1906." Well, why not?

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It has been the fashion among a certain clique of literary men (or as Thackeray used to call them "literary gents") to talk of the *Punch* Table with the utmost deference. The Cabinet Council in Downing Street in the lively imaginations of some authors was of secondary importance to the conference held round the Mahogany Tree of Bouverie Street. Far be it from me, "a leading humourist," to dispute the suggestion. So far as my recollection goes, England, the British Empire, nay, the entire human race could not have got on without the "big cut" in *Punch*—and I and some other wits representing the essence of comedy in Great Britain were the authors of it. In the palmy days of *Punch*—from 1874 to 1902—there is no doubt the cartoon had an influence upon the events of the day which was second to none. But other days other manners. I am afraid, in spite of the efforts of my revered friends, Linley Sambourne and Bernard Partridge, that nowadays the cartoon in *Punch* is not invariably of commanding importance. Possibly the reason for this decrease in influence is the fact that there are so many competing cartoons. The *Westminster Gazette* and the *P.M.G.*, to mention two of a score of other papers, have excellent cartoonists teeming with admirable ideas. The weekly pleasantries of *Punch* are frequently anticipated by daily contemporaries.

It will be seen from the extract from my diary written in 1876—when I had been writing for

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Bouverie Street for two years or thereabouts—that I was greatly proud of being invited to “The Table Round,” as George du Maurier used to call it. But in my case it was a family appreciation. *Punch* was born in 1841, some few years before I drew my first breath of life, and from infancy up to man’s estate I had been taught to reverence the amusing little dwarf of Whitefriars. By the way, my friend Mr. Spielmann, who has told us all that can be known of the *London Charivari*, I think has never explained why the paper came to be known as “*Mr. Punch*,” instead of by its initial consonant as in the case of other periodicals. I believe it was Douglas Jerrold who gave *Punch* the honourable, respectable, middle-classy title of “Mr.” It was a tradition in Bouverie Street that the sacred name of *Punch* should never be used outside the precincts of the office. But as this is a free country, I did not hesitate to call my little booklet published in 1905 “The à Becketts of *Punch*.” I was influenced by family reasons.

And yet I am not quite sure that “of *Punch*” will be a lasting title when an author is considered by posterity. Already Thackeray, one of the mainstays of Bouverie Street, is known as Thackeray, quite short. No one nowadays speaks of “Thackeray of *Punch*.” Again, my father is better known, I venture to believe, as the author of the “Comic Histories of England,” and “Rome,” and “The Comic Blackstone,” than as a contributor to *Punch*. Du Maurier is not “of *Punch*,” nor

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“Dicky” Doyle, nor John Leech. Sir Francis Burnand, my old chief, I venture to suggest, will be better remembered for his “Happy Thoughts”—one of the most amusing books ever published—and his hundred and one plays and burlesques than for his close association with *Punch*. The reputation of the paper, I cannot help thinking, was built up by the men who were its contributors. This being so, it would be more appropriate to say “*Punch* of Thackeray or Leech or à Beckett or Burnand,” than Thackeray, Leech, à Beckett, or Burnand “of *Punch*.”

As an example of the possibility of disassociation I may instance my own pleasant visit to the West Indies a few months ago. Thanks to the accident that I was elected in 1900-01 to the Presidency of the Institute of Journalists, I had come across Sir Alfred Jones at the table of my friend Sir Edward Russell. Sir Alfred was most kind and promised me that if I ever would like to see the West Indies, in which he took particular interest, he would make me his guest for the purpose. Remembering this a few years later, when I could call myself “of *Punch*” in the past rather than the present tense, I approached him. Things were dull in Fleet Street—“Nothing moving save stagnation,” to quote Matthews in “Used Up,” and the rest of it. Now was the time for a week-end in Jamaica. I could stretch my legs on board ship for a fortnight or so, deliver a couple of lectures at Kingston and make myself generally useful in the tropics, and be

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back in town in time to enjoy the remainder of the London season. "Start on the 18th of May, good time until the 19th of June, and return just after Waterloo Day so as not to interfere with the fête of the Iron Duke," as my friend F.C.B. would have put it. Well, I carried out this programme, and although the local Press kindly recognised my presence in Jamaica every day of my visit, I was never once referred to as "à Beckett of *Punch*." Although I had been associated with the paper for more than a quarter-of-a-century, it was always "à Beckett of something else." Now I was an eminent journalist, now a noted member of the Bar, the guest at a dinner presided over by the Attorney-General, and now "a living link of Empire." "I can tell a good story" about that title, to paraphrase the introduction to an amusing anecdote anent the Latin grace told in the Hall of Trinity College, Dublin.

My visit had been a great success in those sunny tropics. I had been greeted in the kindest way by all sorts and conditions of men. Dinners and receptions had been given in my honour, and had I been Mr. Chamberlain or Mr. Winston Churchill or Mr. Augustine Birrell, or the three Right Honourable gentlemen rolled into one, I could not have been treated better. Look at that now! Well, it occurred to my friend Mr. Haggart to lend me the saloon of the *Port Kingston* for a luncheon where I might act as host to those with whom I had been a grateful guest. I sent out

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invitations and there was quite a brilliant gathering. Then through a misunderstanding, somehow I suddenly found myself in the place of honour being entertained instead of entertaining. Speeches were made. I returned thanks and insisted that the Imperial idea was outside politics—which it is—and was cheered to the echo. The local papers—of both political sides—greeted me as a “living link of Empire,” and insisted that I came as a Legate from the Powers that were in the Mother Country. As a matter of fact, although before leaving England for the West Indies I had been in correspondence with the Colonial Office, I spoke entirely as one unattached. Later on I gave an account of my visit to the Colonial Office, but my report I made public property in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Still, I shall never forget my title of “a living link of Empire,” and the pleasant memory of that delightful luncheon which went wrong—or rather right.

Speaking seriously, I believe I did some good as a patriot. I found that the impression was gaining ground that the Mother Country was somewhat indifferent to the needs of our Crown Colonies, and dispelled it. Thanks to the hospitality of my friend, Sir Alfred Jones, I was able to give my testimony to add to many others that there exists no more charming health resort than Jamaica in the autumn and winter, when the islands are at their best. You can travel by the delightful liners of Messrs. Elder Dempster and Company, and live

TOM TAYLOR OFF *PUNCH* DUTY

in the Constant Spring Hotel, the best appointed of hostelryes. And if you happen to be an orator and a patriot, why, you can prove yourself "a living link of Empire." Alas, as I revise these proofs I hear of the Jamaica disaster!

But to return to the *Punch* Table, or rather, not to return to it. There have been so many stories of what it is that a suggestion of what it is not might prove quite a novelty. In the palmy days of *Punch*—1874 to 1902—the members of "the Cabinet Council of Bouverie Street" had plenty of things to do and to think about, besides the delightful three-hour causeries from 7 to 11 on Wednesday evenings. For instance, Tom Taylor, the first of my two editors, was not only writing for the stage, but on the staff of the *Times*. He was the best read of men and the most delightful of companions. He had a charming house and grounds in Lavender Sweep, then a *rus in urbe*, where he used to entertain largely. He had his serious moments, like many others of the *Punch* men, and took the deepest interest in the earth to earth coffin movement. I remember he was most anxious that I should visit the gardens of Stafford House, where there was held an exhibition of these rather gruesome baskets.

"But why should I go?" I asked. "I really would prefer to leave any arrangements about my funeral to my executors; they would be better able to look after them than I shall."

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"My dear fellow, you never will know when you will want a coffin."

"Yes, but that is rather an advantage than otherwise."

"Well, you go to Stafford House and have a look at them. They really are most inviting. Not the conventional polished oak things, but pretty, delicate hampers."

"Could they be used for a pic-nic? You'll remember there is a cold meat train much patronised by subs. bound for Aldershot."

"Don't be frivolous. I shall take it as a personal favour if you will look at the coffins. I have promised to send all my friends to look at them."

So I visited the coffins. Tom Taylor, I am afraid, was subsequently rather disappointed because he discovered I had not purchased one. Truth to tell, it was fortunate I did not buy one. I should have had it on my hands for twenty or thirty years. I suppose I should have tried to get rid of it. But how? It would scarcely do for a wedding present, unless sent anonymously or with somebody else's card. And that would be mean. Besides the coffin might have been traced. I earnestly hope they were a success, and that their sale was not seriously affected by cremation. My leader, Tom Taylor, believed in them to the end of his existence, and I fancy was buried in one of them.

I have already spoken of the many-sidedness of my friend F.C.B. When he was Editor of *Punch*

FARE IN BOUVERIE STREET

he had always the welfare of the paper at heart and took infinite trouble about it as the quoted letter—one of hundreds—will testify. But he had any amount of other work. Then there was Du Maurier, who wrote “Trilby,” and used his graceful pencil in the magazines. For some years I was his “nearest neighbour”—to quote the happy phrase of H.M. the King—and delighted in his conversation. After he had made his great success he always used to speak on behalf of the millionaires at the Table, linking his arm in the arm of a very kind and popular and, I am glad to say, prosperous proprietor, still my dear and valued friend, Sir William Agnew. When I was a weekly guest in Bouverie Street there was not, I think, one of us who would have sunk by leaving *Punch*. I do not even except myself, for I find after all that has happened I am still swimming. In the halcyon days of *Punch*—1874 to 1902—the dinners, as can be seen by the bill of fare I have given, were excellent. On one occasion we had—as a change—soup, fish and beef, a pudding and cheese. Someone remonstrated.

“Well,” put in one of the convives, “I don’t see why we should complain. It is the sort of fare that was set before our predecessors.”

“Yes,” returned the first speaker; “and that’s what killed them!”

I suppose I linger with my recollections of the *Punch* Table, finding my justification in the title of this little book. From my point of view, there

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is but one comic paper in England, and its name is *Punch*. In its palmy days (I will not repeat the "joke" of 1874 to 1902, the time I dined at the Table) there was the strongest *esprit de corps*. When I think about it, it seems to me that this feeling of attachment to the paper and its proprietors arose out of a sentiment of reciprocity, loyalty and kindness, and entire goodwill on both sides. To get called to the Table in the time of Lemon, Shirley Brooks, Tom Taylor and Burnand, a man had to be a leading humourist and a good clubbable fellow. It was felt that, if a cantankerous sort of wag put his legs under the Bouverie Street mahogany, the charm of the gathering would disappear. For, after all, the service was voluntary and not compulsory, and there was not a man at the Table who, if he pleased, could not have dined equally well and pleasantly elsewhere. And that was the difficulty of keeping the men together—there were so many competing entertainments on a Wednesday elsewhere. But during the time I was connected with *Punch* the first consideration of those who had become the successors to the chairs once occupied by "Mark's Merry Men" was the paper, and nothing but the paper. It was like the "Mess" of the most delightful regiment imaginable, with every convive a picked man. I fancy—nay, I think it would be mock modesty if I did not add that I know—I was accepted at the *Punch* Table in my character of a typical clubman. From first to last my

FRIENDS ALL ROUND

relations with my associates in Bouverie Street were cordial in the extreme. There used to be a tradition in Fleet Street that change in a paper was a tacit admission of failure. Nowadays, when, thanks to the energy of Lord Northcliffe and others of the same generation, improvement is seen in all directions, the tradition's application seems out of date.

And yet I have an old-fashioned belief that *Punch*, dear old *Punch*, did very well in the good old days of old. What could have been pleasanter than the visits to Hampton Court and further up the river, the journey to Paris on one memorable occasion and all the delightful hospitality of friends to friends? In those days—happy days—the “Merry Men” were “William” and “John Henry” and “Tom” and “Frank” and “Jack-ides,” and “Kiki” and “Professor” and “Gil.” and “E. J. M.” and “Arthur.” All gone. And the good fellowship upon which I lay so much stress has its business side. I have had the honour, at one time or another, to be connected with many papers, and I can say as an expert that there is nothing better to keep a journal prosperous than *esprit de corps*. Look at the old-established London daily journals, the *Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Morning Post*, the *Chronicle*, the *Pall Mall*, the *Westminster*, and hear what is said about them by their employés. How grateful working journalists are to Glenesk, Burnham, Frank Lloyd, Astor, Walter, and

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Newnes. May *Punch* ever be actuated by *esprit de corps*. It was *esprit de corps* that kept the band of brilliant wits together in the forties, the fifties, the sixties and the seventies. May the movement continue to the last chapter of the last volume. Stay, I must amend the wish by adding, may there never be a last volume !

Serious thinkers have said it would be something very little short of a national calamity if anything happened to *Punch*. The paper never can be better than it has been, and never can be worse. So it ought—and probably will—go on for ever. Speaking as an expert, I do not think there is room for a rival. Certainly there are many excellent comic writers who have never contributed to *Punch*. But it is a question that, were they gathered together on the conditions governing *Punch* in the days of Thackeray, they would be welded into a band of “Merry Men,” that might have been captained by “Mark.” I dreamed a dream once that, failing *Punch*—and *Punch* had failed me—there might be a paper as good and as clever, with an improved “dinner” to which “distinguished outsiders” might be invited, and with all the old traditions preserved, but at the charge of a penny in lieu of threepence weekly. But the dream became a nightmare, and I woke up to find that there was nothing in it.

The general impression of the *Punch* dinner, if there be a general impression nowadays, is a gathering of wits discussing the affairs of the

THORNS IN THE CUSHION

nation and enjoying in the hours of relaxation their own society. This, on the whole, is a tolerably correct impression. As I have explained, the process of selection of expert and clubable persons worked to produce a very welcome gathering. Still, I must confess, at times I absolutely dreaded entering the "festive board" lest some subject for debate might be started in which as a Catholic I should have to take my part in fear and trembling. I can quite understand how "Dicky" Doyle came to leave his seat at the Table. But this dread ceased when F.C.B. became Editor, as religious questions were banished from consideration. As I have said, the policy throughout his reign was to support all creeds and to laugh at none.

As to the composition of the cartoon by those present. The idea was certainly excellent. The Editor started the subject as a rule. He had carefully read up the papers with a view to furnishing the "big cut" and "cartoon junior." As a rule there was a designer-in-chief. In the early days of the paper my father, I believe, was the chief suggester of cuts. This is quite possible and probable, as his connection with *Figaro in London*, the precursor of *Punch*, had accustomed him to the designing of cartoons. Then, after some time, Thackeray took up the duty. It is well known that Thackeray remained to the last at the *Punch* Table, although he had ceased to receive cheques from Messrs. Bradbury and Evans,

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the original proprietors of the *London Charivari*. It was, as all the world knows, a dispute about the treatment of Napoleon III which led to Thackeray's rupture with Bouverie Street. Then when Shirley Brooks joined the Table his influence began to be felt. When he became Editor, on the death of Mark Lemon, it was, I have been given to understand, almost paramount. When I joined the Table, Tom Taylor was Editor, and the position of "designer-in-chief" was apparently in abeyance. Most shades of opinion were represented, from the high Tory of Charles Keene to the *diletante* Radicalism of Du Maurier. F.C.B. and I were neutral with a bias, so far as I myself was concerned, in favour of Conservatism. This was rather surprising, as in the days of *Black and White* I had represented the Liberal cause. The remainder of the staff had no particular fixed opinions, save that the proprietors belonged to what was then called the popular party.

For some little while I used to hold my own as a designer, as I had had a good deal of practice in connection with papers of somewhat of a kindred character. Looking through my diary I see pretty frequently, "started the subject for the cut which was ultimately accepted." It was when "E.J.M." joined us that we found that we had in our midst a born designer of cartoons. The Editor started the subject that he considered offered the best possibilities, and then turned instinctively to "E.J.M." Then the creator of "'Arry" used

THE CREATION OF A CARTOON

to produce a bundle of papers and a note-book and suggest cartoons by the score. He was a most amiable and kindly fellow, and everyone at the Table, without a single exception, was fond of him. When F.C.B. had set the ball a-rolling then would come Milliken's rough idea. It was nearly invariably accepted and "knocked about" by those present until it grew into a form acceptable to Sir John Tenniel—otherwise "Jackides." The spirit of the discussion was concession. Each man urged alterations that would favour his own particular opinions and by degrees the cartoon took shape, Sir John with the artist's instinct, trying to keep down that enemy to design, "labelling." F.C.B. contended (and I believe he was right), that unless you wrote your meaning in the largest possible letters, the British Public would exclaim, "What does it mean? We don't understand it."

I remember years ago talking to the late Dion Boucicault, and he took the same view of the B.P.

"Always let your characters be known to the audience. Introduce them as quickly as possible."

And those who remember the great dramatist's pieces will recognise the precedent. Two men would come on and talk about someone. They would describe his characteristics and all about him. When this was accomplished one would say to the other, "Why, here he comes!" and leave the stage clear for his entrance. Perhaps the best

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introduction of this kind is to be found in my friend Mr. Pinero's celebrated play, "His House in Order." An interviewing journalist gets hold of a private secretary and asks for information about the people staying in the mansion in which the scene of the comedy is laid. The interviewer represents the British Public, and about anything that is not quite clear he asks for further and better particulars. Most admirable, artistic and realistic. Something of the same sort happened in the first Act of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," when, over coffee and cigars, the widower told his intimates of his intention to marry the unfortunate heroine of the story.

The attraction of Bouverie Street to the *Punch habitués* was simply marvellous. My father always kept in touch with Mark Lemon, and when I was connected with the dear old paper there was nothing I would not do for it. I remember on one occasion, when I had wandered with my wife as far as Rome, getting a summons to attend the "*Almanack* Supper." On a Saturday in October there used to be a special gathering at which the *pièce de resistance* used to be a lark and kidney pudding. After this delicacy had been discussed the other discussion came in for consideration. This was the only time during the year that "the Merry Men" were expected to provide not only the cartoon but subjects for the smaller cuts. The *Almanack* double-page was suggested with a view to introducing as many figures as possible.

THE SEVEN AGES OF LUGGAGE

My dear old friend—and the friend of my father before me—Sir John Tenniel, never objected to the number. It was holiday time, and we all made use of our privilege to pile up the agony. Very often the big cut was founded on such subjects as the new electricity—exploration—the fad of the moment. Then came ideas for Keene, Du Maurier and Sambourne. We all had thought of subjects for small cuts, half-pages, whole pages, borders. The Calendar fell to “Sammy,” otherwise dear young (because he can never grow old) Linley Sambourne. Once this feature was given to “Dicky” Doyle, Bennett and Tenniel. I remember that for years I used to suggest “the seven ages of luggage.” Everyone at the Table expressed admiration at the notion, but it was always held over.

“Capital,” would exclaim Charles Keene, “but I think it would better suit Kiki.”

“Nothing I should like better,” would say the ever-amiable Du Maurier, “but I have such a lot of other things to do. The very thing for you, Sammy.”

“The very thing,” echoed E.L.S., “but I shan’t have time. If I am to show the ocean I shall have to study the manners and customs of every fish in creation. And you can’t get photographs of fishes—at least not good ones.”

This was the kind of reception (I will not swear to the actual words) that my “delightful notion” used to get, and “the seven ages of luggage” was

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postponed, I am afraid, indefinitely. I still think something of it, and it may be considered, if not next year, at least before (say) 1926.

Well, *Punch* is still to the fore, and no doubt the Wednesday gatherings are as regular and as amusing and as useful as ever. Thackeray said that the loss of individuals would never be felt — much — in Bouverie Street. Certainly the *London Charivari* has survived the loss of a number of very distinguished contributors. I notice that the management of to-day is most active. Only the other morning I received an invitation to become a subscriber on particularly advantageous terms. To assist me to understand what a capital paper it was I was given a miniature “made up” copy full of pictures of the doings of members of the Bar. No doubt the fame of A. Briefless, Junior, and Briefless, Senior, had rather languished in Bouverie Street. It caused me something of a pang on behalf of my father and—well—myself.

But may the *London Charivari* continue to prosper! And I say this although I cannot help remembering the “palmy days” of *Punch*—1874 to 1902.

CHAPTER XIV

HUMOUR OF YESTERDAY, TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

The Wits of Yesterday and To-day—Jokes Old and New—" *Punch* Makers of To-day"—A Suggestion for "Pages from *Punch*"—The Music Halls Invade the Theatres—The Gentle Humour Takes the Place of Comic Cruelty—Chaff of the Dramatists of the Forties—Suggestion for a State-subsidised Companion to *Punch*—Personal Encouragement—A Forecast of the Fun of the Future—The British Love of a Joke—The Comic Writer of the Future to be a Good Humourist—Like the Author.

WHILE I have been writing my recollections, a battle has waged round the Table of *Punch*. With a fine disregard of the past, someone in a popular magazine called attention to the wits of the day, and ignored all those who were not of modern date. Upon this, my friend Sir Francis Burnand, who had been lecturing at Chester, gave some advice to those about—not to marry—but to send jests to Bouverie Street. Immediately the lecture was commented on in London, a representative of a leading daily paper called upon me and asked me to put my views on the subject in writing.

"I will not interview you," said my friend, "because I do not think it fair to deprive a journalist of his copy. Interviewing is all very well for amateurs, but professional men should not be called upon to supply free copy to their *confrères*."

So I wrote what has already appeared in these pages. I explained how difficult it had been for Sir Francis Burnand to secure new jokes for the

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paper he had edited with so much discrimination for so long a time. In the course of the war round the standard of the *London Charivari* it appeared that some time before the retirement (suggested a little prematurely) of Sir Francis Burnand, there had been appointed an Art Editor.

This had happened after my retirement (suggested a little prematurely), and so I know nothing about it. If I may venture a criticism, I may say that it was an unnecessary appointment, this new art editorship. If there was one thing in which F.C.B. took a pride and showed the soundest discrimination, it was in the selection of the small cuts of *Punch*. Before he left London for his annual holiday he used to make up the cuts of *Punch* for a couple of months in advance, excluding the "big cut" and "cartoon junior." Why this new office was created is a mystery to me. The number in the magazine article which contained the announcement of the new art editorship, also published some portraits of "*Punch* Makers of To-day," including a fancy picture of the present Editor-in-chief overwhelmed with proofs. The "overset" must have grown considerably since the days of F.C.B. Then came some interesting likenesses of the new men who had filled the chairs left vacant by their predecessors. But I must confess I was a little disappointed not to see the pictures of the present proprietors, who have done so much to make *Punch* what it has become. I had the pleasure of knowing Messrs. Philip Agnew

THE PROPRIETORS OF *PUNCH*

and Laurence Bradbury when they wore Eton jackets. Later on they took part in my company at Gray's Inn in "The Maske of Flowers." One could play the piano admirably, and the other could sing and act with great *aplomb*. They had been at Rugby and the University, and both were members of the Bar. Considering how much the *London Charivari* owes to these talented gentlemen, it seems rather an oversight that no reference was made to them either by pen or pencil in the article upon "*Punch* Makers of To-day." It is scarcely fair to omit them.

My experience of the *Punch* Table taught me how much is done by the proprietors of *Punch* in keeping up the *esprit de corps*. My father was the most intimate friend of the first of the Bradburys, and took the Bradbury of the second generation to Paris with him on a holiday trip. The Bradbury of the second generation was one of the kindest and wisest men I ever met. It was through his thoughtful consideration of the members of his staff that all the "Merry Men" of the nineteenth century were devoted to the interests of Bouverie Street. I am never tired of telling the story of his generosity to myself. I wanted £100—and to obtain it suggested a scheme that apparently was deferred to make its appearance long afterwards, when my proposal had no doubt been forgotten, in the shape of "*Punch's* Library of Humour." My notion was "Pages from *Punch*."

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“Don’t like it,” said W. H. Bradbury. “But I shall have great pleasure in sending you the cheque for £100. You are worth £2 a week more to the firm than you have been receiving. And as you have been worth it for the last year we will make the salary retrospective.”

And up came a cheque for £100! Something like a proprietor! Naturally I gave my best energies for nearly thirty years to *Punch*. I have but one regret. I regret my action on public grounds. Had I worked at the Bar instead of working for *Punch* I might by this time have become Lord Chancellor or Lord Chief Justice. Think of that now! Or rather don’t think of it, as the thought is distinctly annoying! Well, I have had my say about my friend Sir Francis Burnand, who has travelled about England with a lecture bearing the suggestive title, “Nearly Fifty Years with *Punch*.” And I have paid my homage to Messrs. Philip Agnew and Laurence Bradbury, successors to the Bradburys and Agnews of the past. And now I have other matters calling for attention of nearly equal moment. Circumstances have occurred that have rendered my devotion to the *London Charivari* of secondary importance. However, I must add one word of further thanks to the new managers. They have a solid appreciation of the workers of the past. They republish their work, they lecture upon it. Well, I believe they are right. The back numbers of *Punch* are as popular—so it seems to me—as the present

THE HALL INVADES THE THEATRE

issue. Enter a hotel on a wet Sunday afternoon. If there is a complete edition, everyone gets a volume and enjoys it.

And now, before I ring down the curtain, I may say a few words about the humour of yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. Of yesterday we have but vague recollections. Puns were thought amusing, and comic songs were nothing without idiotic dances and refrains. The programme of the theatre contained a drama sandwiched in between two roaring farces. The pit and gallery loved their money's worth and required a good hearty laugh to send them cheerfully to bed. Maddison Morton, H. J. Byron and F. C. Burnand were writing the most amusing of plays. By degrees the final farce was ousted, to terminate the programme in time to enable the audience to catch the suburban trains. To make up for the omission of the ousted farce, "comic relief" was introduced into every melodrama. Then the critics laughed at the "comic relief"—not with it—and it had to disappear before the strokes of the blue pencil.

The jokes of the theatre had disappeared, so the play-house had to be recruited from the music hall. For some time before this happened the comic songs of the great Vance had been annexed by the burlesque writers. "Champagne Charley is my name" was replaced by "Captain Crossley," and every popular melody appeared in two places, the theatre and the music hall at one and the same

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hour. Then Dion Boucicault, in one of his sensation dramas—I fancy it was in “After Dark”—reproduced a music hall with all its entertainments *en bloc* at the Royal Princess’ Theatre. Strange to say, the scene fell rather flat, in spite of several “turns” of excellent quality.

I am taking yesterday as fifty or sixty years ago. The fun of our fathers and our grandfathers appeared in the form of *Punch* in 1841, when humour took the place of something rather stronger. Thanks to the kindness of my friend, Mr. M. H. Spielmann, I have a collection of covers of comic papers which preceded the first publication of the *London Charivari*. They are all of the same type, and appear to have been founded on my father’s *Figaro in London*, which appeared in 1831, when he had reached the mature age of twenty. Gilbert Abbott à Beckett wrote with the fearlessness and light-heartedness of an emancipated schoolboy. There was nothing but “chaff” in his most rollicking moments. He used to laugh at Lord Brougham, who later on became one of his greatest friends, and credit him with all sorts of small jokes. This seemed to be the *specialité* of my father—to be able, so to speak, to dwarf a giant, to tear off the tinsel of a sham.

Readers of the “Comic Histories of England” and “Rome” will find that all the celebrities of the past are rendered ridiculous by being relieved of their state robes and supplied with dressing-gowns.

THE GENTLER HUMOUR

Thackeray "went for" his pet aversions, his Louis XIV and his Fourth George with savage zest. My father chaffed Henry VIII and had a kindly word for poor old Guy Fawkes. Fortunately the author of the *Comic Histories* has in John Leech the most kind and gentle of collaborators. There was no gall in à Beckett's pen nor Leech's pencil. And really I think I may venture to date the birth of the modern humour, as distinguishable from the brutal fun of the past, with the appearance of the *Comic History of England*. My father, who had sown his literary wild oats—a schoolboy crop—in the *Figaro in London*, had sobered down into a genial, kindly humourist when he became the comic historian. And here too, I think I may trace the influence of the *Punch* Table. One of the bitterest satirists of yesterday was Douglas Jerrold. All the cruel things that raised a bitter laugh were credited rightly or wrongly to him. Even to-day his name is remembered as the sayer of sharp sayings.

When *Punch* was being published at 194 Strand, in 1844, there was issued from this office a shilling volume giving scenes from the rejected comedies by some of the competitors for the prize of £500, offered by Mr. B. Webster, lessee of the Haymarket Theatre, for the best original comedy illustrative of English manners. It was written by Gilbert Abbott à Beckett. In this little book my father gave parodies of the works of Sheridan Knowles, Douglas Jerrold, Serjeant Talfourd,

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J. R. Planché, E. F. FitzBall, Dion Boucicault, Leigh Hunt, Mark Lemon, Bulwer Lytton and himself. Each "scene" was prefaced with a short account of its author. This is what my father wrote about his *Punch* colleague, Douglas Jerrold:—"The comedy from which the following scene is taken, like many of the works of its author, is very severe upon the lawyers; and the dramatist, in his desire to lash, makes the attorney—his principal character—occasionally lash himself with extraordinary bitterness. This the author would no doubt defend by asserting that it is in the nature of the scorpion to dash his sting into his own back. At least such may be his excuse if he thinks a scorpion black enough and venomous enough to bear out the comparison. It would appear to be an error in this comedy that Joe, the errand boy, is as smart upon his master as his master is upon him, but it is perhaps a piece of ungrateful higher criticism to complain of a dramatist for putting wit into the mouths of all his characters, when to put it into the mouths of any is a difficulty that some of the writers for the stage in the present day appear to find insurmountable."

It is instructive to note the value put upon a play of first-rate importance in 1844. The regulation price per act was £100, which would be considered "handsome" by the leading dramatists of the period. The late Benjamin Webster offers the same terms for his comedy of five acts. Both

HARMLESS HUMOUR

Dickens and Thackeray were anxious to write for the stage, but the prices of the "forties" and the "fifties" were a bar to them turning their attention to that branch of intellectual effort. Thackeray when he got to his house in Palace Gardens, gave an amateur performance of "The Lion and the Lamb," a dramatization of his romance, "Lovell the Widower." No doubt he was following the precedent set by Dickens in the Tavistock House Theatricals.

It will be seen that my father included a scene from his own rejected comedy, which he called "The School for Sentiment, or the Tar! the Tear!! and the Tilbury!!!" He describes himself as "The author of 'The Seminary for Sensibility' and other MS. dramas." This is his introduction to his own work, which I am tempted to quote because it gives an excellent idea of his kindly, genial humour:—"The extreme conciseness of this gentleman's style enables us to print his comedy entire, and when we see the wide range of subjects it embraces, the rough honesty of the Tar, the recklessness of the libertine lord, the abiding endurance of the patient girl, the affectionate bluffness of the Admiral her father, the merry promptness of the coxswain to indulge in one of those hornpipes which constitute the distinctive character of the British seaman; when we see so much genuine nature, such pathos, such a wholesome enthusiasm for English commerce, such a nice feeling for the Peerage, which makes

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the libertine lord repent in the fourth act ; when we see all this, we are only surprised that the comedy is in this collection instead of being acted on the boards of the Haymarket. Whether the fine and healthy tone of British sentiment, whether the well-turned compliments of the English merchant would have told in the present day of artificial institutions may be doubtful ; but with all respect for the Committee who rejected "The School for Sentiment," we think the experiment was worth trying. Perhaps Mr. Webster may yet be tempted to cast a piece, so evidently written with an eye to his present company." The play recommended to be so cast, for the reason alleged, ran to no more than 1,000 words !

Speaking of Mark Lemon, his Editor on *Punch*, my father chaffed him about his proneness to make old men heroes. "Having exhausted the annals of modern longevity, he will seize on the venerable Methuselah, and drag him through all the exciting incidents of a five-act play in the Haymarket." But my father ended his notice with a compliment. "If, however, Mr. Lemon has a tendency to old age in his heroes, it must in justice to him be allowed that he rushes into the other extreme—avoiding the venerable and seeking the new—in his jokes and incidents."

It is quite conceivable that the "*Punch* Table" had its humanising influence. Thackeray and my father were sworn friends, and the gentleman who required keeping in order was their colleague,

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED

Douglas Jerrold. My father was also closely associated with the Editor, Mark Lemon, with whom he collaborated in the dramatic world. Judging from my own experience in the Bouverie Street dining-room, I can easily imagine that there was a strong restraining influence upon the bitter Douglas Jerrold. The Wednesday dinner was an excellent occasion for friendly chaff. The tradition was in the old days brotherhood between employers and employed. The "Merry Men" kept one another in order, while the proprietors wondered and admired. So after all we may regard the *Punch* table of the past as a School of Humour. Really I am not at all sure that such an institution does not deserve the support of the Legislature. Perhaps Mr. Augustine Birrell may think the matter over as another branch of national education requiring development. It should be outside all considerations of a commercial character. Mr. Birrell (who has a pretty wit of his own) might take the chair. He might be supported by Messrs. W. S. Gilbert, Pett Ridge, G. R. Sims, Sydney Grundy, Zangwill, Anthony Hope Hawkins, Spencer Hughes, A. W. Pinero, and Adrian Ross. I have chosen those who to the best of my belief are not connected in any way with *Punch*. Then perhaps there might be added from the Bouverie Street men, Sir Francis Cowley Burnand and myself. Mr. Birrell would keep us all well together. Then, perhaps, when we had educated one another by cheerful association, our

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chairman might consider the advisability of starting, of course at the Government's expense, but with our assistance, a new comic paper. And I make the suggestion with the greater earnestness as I do not think it would interfere seriously with *Punch*. I have sufficient confidence in Mr. Birrell to believe that he would produce something very different from the *London Charivari*.

I believe the Board of Trade has an official organ. To the best of my belief, I have never seen the paper, so cannot say whether it is comic or not. Mr. Birrell might do good service to the State by thinking the matter out. If he were kind enough to allow me to help him over the business side, I think I could give him some valuable hints about advertisements. But these—when a Government organ is under discussion—are details of no importance. Speaking quite seriously and not as a professional humourist—who has wandered a little way from his original calling—there is something in the idea. We educate people to be thrifty and intelligent. Why not educate them to be funny? If the majority of the nation could only learn to see the comic side of all that is wrong they would laugh at the absurdity of becoming wicked.

And then there would really be no aspersion upon *Punch* as it exists to-day with its excellent staff and accessories. As one belonging to a family who for generations have held the *London Charivari* in the highest esteem, and having

A SUBSIDIZED COMIC PAPER

myself been personally connected with it for more than a quarter-of-a-century, I can see no possible objection. It really does seem strange that a large country like England should have but one predominant comic paper. I am obliged to say predominant, otherwise I might do injustice to *Judy*, *Comic Cuts*, and other periodicals of a kindred character. To all practical purposes *Punch* is *unique*. *Punch* is the receptacle of all—no, that is an exaggeration—of much, yes much of the national humour. Surely there should be more than one first-rate, highly humorous, absolutely decorous, admirably conducted comic paper for England, Scotland and Wales? It has been suggested over and over again that we should have a State-subsidized theatre for the musical education of the masses. This being so, why not a State-subsidized comic paper for the humorous education of the masses? It would not hurt *Punch* in the least. The *London Charivari* has lived down all rivalry for more than half-a-century. And what it has done in the past I have no doubt it will do in the future. And I do not say this because I was connected with *Punch* for nearly thirty years (as my friend Sir Francis Burnand was connected with *Punch* for nearly fifty years), but because I honestly believe it.

I do not wish to labour what I am sufficiently conceited to believe is a really excellent idea, but I must call attention to the fact that technical education is every day receiving, very properly,

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increased attention. We have a School of Cookery in the Buckingham Palace Road, which I fancy my friend Sir James Crichton Browne would consider a valuable auxiliary to the successors of the School Board. The body, according to my scientific friend's theory, must be nurtured at the same rate as the rate governing the cultivation of the mind. According to the best authorities, I believe—to put it colloquially—it is dangerous to the health to learn geography on an empty stomach. There is a good deal of truth in old sayings, and one of the most popular of phrases runs, "You must laugh to grow fat." The Institution for which I plead might perhaps be a sub-department of the National School of Cookery. This would possibly be a convenient arrangement with a view to the foundation of a State-subsidized sister to the *Punch* Dinner.

It is a little difficult to judge the humour of to-day. Of course one can read *Punch*, an assumption that must not be denied, as *Punch* is the predominating representative of humorous literature. One can read *Punch* I repeat, but where else do we find the highly comic? The theatre has competed with the periodical certainly for quite a century. Leaving out of account the burlesques of Planché, Talfourd and à Beckett as productions of too remote a date, we can accept the admirable work of Burnand and Gilbert as belonging to a nearer past.

Nowadays we have the musical comedies and

WHOLESOME WIT

"the halls." According to the Press—the best possible authority—musical comedies rely more upon their accessories than upon their book. The librettos of the entertainments that have taken the place of the old-fashioned burlesques twice out of thrice are rather hard reading. Most of our modern musical comedies are very entertaining, but they would be nothing, or at any rate very little, without their music and dances and pretty forms and faces. No doubt the comic sayings are most humorous and deserve all the hearty laughter they provoke. But I cannot help feeling that they are scarcely up to the standard of "Ixion," "Black Eyed Susan," "Trial by Jury," and "O Gemini, the Brothers of Co(u)rse." The second of my list has been revived again and again. Really, has not the time been reached when once more it should reappear on the boards of a London Theatre?

There is one feature in the humour of to-day which I think should be acknowledged with thankfulness. In the past the idea was to hide one's light as much as possible. The anonymous was strictly the rule in British journalism. Even when I joined *Punch*, the tradition was to keep ourselves, our dinner and all our arrangements secret. It was only on the appearance of Mr. Spielmann's colossal work, "The History of *Punch*," that the veil was drawn aside from 10 Bouverie Street. It is difficult to estimate at too high a value the modern mode of personal encouragement. It is

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most helpful—I speak from personal experience—to find oneself kindly, or even unkindly, noticed in the papers. Efforts have been made to laugh the custom down—I believe by the disappointed—by talking contemptuously of “Mutual admiration societies.” Why the very name “Mutual Admiration Society” is misleading. As a matter of fact, the mutual admirer admires himself only. If he writes in praise of someone else, it is—so I have been told, and I see no reason to doubt the truth of the statement—on terms of the strictest reciprocity. I fancy there is a Scottish witticism—and Scottish humour is much more prevalent than is believed in certain prejudiced quarters—to the effect that “he who scratches others must himself be scratched.” So he who admires others must himself be admired. And why not? The fact that he has one admirer—*i.e.* himself—is *primâ facie* evidence that there must be other admirers. So in spite of the spiteful jests of the unsuccessful, I cannot help feeling that personal encouragement is of great value.

But of one thing I think we Britons may be really proud, and thanks to our editors, all the humour that now finds expression in the professional comic and more serious branches of the Press is perfectly pure and without offence. In the days of Gilray and Rowlandson the cartoons were generally coarse and brutal. Nowadays the drawings that delight us are comic without being vulgar, as someone said of somebody’s reading of

PUNCH IN THE PULPIT

Hamlet. When Sir Francis Burnand was Editor of *Punch*, and the late Tom Taylor preceded him (I had the honour of serving under both) the policy of the great exponent of national humour was to avoid wounding the feelings of anyone.

"We must not attack the man," said Tom Taylor, "but put down the system."

The British public have grown out of their love of cruel personality. Whenever anything turned upon a personal matter rather than a public matter in *Punch*, there were reclamations from the man in the street, or rather from the Squire in the Manor House, and the Rural Dean in the Rectory. Of course, nowadays, there is rather a tendency to an inquisitive interest in domestic affairs which did not exist thirty or forty years ago. This inquisitive interest has been imported, I believe, from America. But this inquisitive interest in domestic affairs has not become a feature in the comic press. In the days of old—a hundred years ago—to be amusing was to be abusive. All this is changed. Nowadays the comic press is absolutely decorous. Everyone can read *Punch* without fear of being shocked. He can be read in the boudoir, in the drawing-room, in the schoolroom. I might even add in the pulpit, as I believe that before now an earnest preacher has found appropriate passages from his pages with which to adorn his address. Some of the most popular writing in English literature has found a place in the columns of *Punch* in the

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shape of "The Song of the Shirt," and the pathetic poems of the late Clement Scott.

I have been asked as an expert to say what I think of the growth or maintenance of British humour. Well, I have in remembrance a great semi-state function that came off about twenty years ago. It will always be memorable to me because it was the occasion of my meeting for the first and last time George Cruikshank, who spoke to me of my father in terms of affection and respect.

"Follow in his footsteps, young man," said he, "and you can't go wrong. He was a good man, your father, a good man."

Well, the ceremony was the inauguration of an Institution to be devoted to the sciences. On account of its high object the name of the Institution was preceded with "Royal." The building was crowded with the precursors of the Smart Set. There was a Guard of Honour of the Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers, and the central figure was the late Duke of Edinburgh (not as yet Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha) and Lord Kilmorey, then Lord Newry, was in attendance. An address was read to His Royal Highness referring to the high aims of the Institution he was requested to open. There was an inspection of the building, and all those present regarded the ceremony as inaugurating a fresh departure in a branch of science that had been somewhat neglected. Professor Buckland had done something for fishes.

COMIC SIDE OF THE ROYAL AQUARIUM

but not enough. The building, which contained an enthusiastic audience cheering a Prince of the Blood Royal, would probably revolutionise the ocean. We were all enthusiastic and cheered ourselves hoarse. And now for the name of the Institution that was to do so much good. The Royal Westminster Aquarium !

The British Public have a keen sense of humour. They treated the high aims of the poor old Aquarium as they treated the genuine art treasures of the Crystal Palace, with good-natured indifference. The British Public will never be serious. It will not do to dragoon them into science and art. They prefer comic songs and lofty tumbling. I have got the greatest possible respect for the Crystal Palace, but venture to believe that a football match in the grounds is a far greater draw than the beautiful reproduction of the Alhambra of Spain (not of Leicester Square) in the building. The Westminster Aquarium soon became a place of entertainment ranking with the music halls of the second class. As it has gone, and all the shareholders are satisfied, I can now speak of it without paying any penalty under the libel laws. And being thus free from the dread of the High Court, I can defiantly declare that the high aims claimed for it at its inauguration were never realised.

It is sad to have to make the admission, but the ocean still remains waiting to be revolutionised. The British Public wanted red-nosed comedians

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and "serio-comic ladies" on the stage and did not care a dump, or rather a shilling (the price of admission) for weird-looking fishes in tanks. By degrees the beautiful baths, carefully constructed for the denizens of the vasty deep, became empty. I fancy there were a dog-fish, a conger-eel and a shrimp who stopped for a long time as the sole inhabitants of the tanks. I have heard it whispered that the three were put in one compartment when the dog-fish devoured the shrimp and the conger-eel swallowed the marine murderer. What became of the watery executioner is shrouded in mystery so far as I am personally concerned. But with the sale of the property to the Wesleyans for a Church House and other buildings of equal respectability all ended happily. This was most gratifying, but still the conclusion of the undertaking was scarcely a realization of the early dreams of its foundation.

Speaking as an expert in humour, the story strikes me—of course I may be wrong—as very funny.

The British Public love to be amused. They have an intense appreciation of the comic. When "Drink" was being played at the Royal Princess's Theatre the great moral lesson in the cause of temperance used to draw crowded and enthusiastic audiences to Oxford Street. The moment the curtain descended after drunkenness had been denounced from the stage, and the denunciation had been cheered to the echo in the auditorium,

THE WIT OF THE STREETS

the pit and the gallery used to stream out of the play-house to have a drink. The play during its run increased—so it is said—the business of the public-houses of the neighbourhood enormously. And I believe the pit and gallery enjoyed the fun of the thing. I believe the English crowd is the best-natured mob in the world. The French are fairly cheerful, but if they are, or believe themselves to be insulted, they “run amuck” like so many Malays. The English are always ready to laugh, even at themselves.

Then there is another nursery of the comic—the London streets. Not very long ago I noticed that a professional humourist was crying down the rival witticism of omnibus drivers. He gave an account of a coachman who used but one joke. It was to advise the motor-man who had come to grief “to take out the horses and go home.” I am not sure that this was the particular jest, but it was something equal or superior in repartee. The professional humourist—who really seemed to be jealous of the poor omnibus driver’s solitary witticism—insisted that the whole tribe of London Jehus was sadly wanting in repartee. I did not think the assertion was quite fair. My own experience of cabmen’s sarcasm tells me that in the hackney coachmen we have a band of excellent humourists. In the days of my youth I once edited a paper called *The Whip*, intended to be the organ of the drivers and conductors of the cab and omnibus industries. It did not

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succeed, chiefly owing to the publisher's untrustworthiness. When he was drunk he neglected the paper and it came (I think) to grief. If *The Whip* had been started as the comic organ of the cab-rank, I believe it could have been worked into a success.

Then the costermongers are, when off duty, delightfully comic. I had the honour to personally command 120 of them when I served in the 7th Battalion (Prince Consort's Own) Rifle Brigade, alias "the Tower 'Amlets Milishy." And every man of my company was a born wag and a good sort. I had to preserve the strictest "silence in the ranks" to prevent laughing when I had some sedate manœuvre to superintend as "forming fours to the right," or "standing at ease by consecutive sections."

Then there is really a good deal of humour amongst the middle classes. If you listen to a shop-girl purchasing from a shopman over a counter, you will hear any amount of badinage. I believe that some of the large establishments in the drapery and haberdashery and general all-sorts line have their own organ full of bright ideas worthy of our best comic papers. I have seen one of my own pieces admirably played by amateurs belonging to Messrs. Marshall and Snelgrove's.

Then to come to what Thackeray used to call "the Upper-suckles," now to be styled, I suppose, "the Smart Set," what an amount of chaff you

GENUINE BRITISH FUN

hear in Rotten Row or the boxes at the Covent Garden Opera. Go to a theatre where they are playing "The Man from Blankley's," or another excellent comedy nearly as good, and listen to the laughter. Why the "Smart Set" absolutely roars at the light-hearted fun. Of course the English are a humorous people. In the smoking-room of the club, in the place of resting (if there be a place of resting) at the Stock Exchange, in the Common Rooms of the Colleges, in fact everywhere you find the same sound of laughter. The English are earnest in everything. They can trade, they can fight, they can go everywhere and do everything. They can laugh and enjoy a joke as easily as tasks of an apparently more difficult character. Of course we are all born humourists and therefore qualified to enjoy *Punch*.

I have now spoken briefly of the humour of yesterday and to-day, and I purpose to say a few words about the humour of to-morrow. It is always unwise to prophesy, but when you have to undertake the task it is better to foretell what will not happen rather than what will occur. For instance, it is wiser to assert that the dome of St. Paul's will not be struck by a passing balloon than that it will be thus treated, at 5.45 p.m. on the 18th of June, 1907. So I will not say what I believe the humour of to-morrow will be, but rather what it will not be.

English humour of to-morrow will not be *risqué*, like the fun of France, or ponderous, like

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the jokes of the Fatherland. It will not be cruel like the cartoons of Gilray and Rowlandson. It will not be indelicate, it will not be unpatriotic, it will not be foolish and feeble. It will not lose the influence of the Public Schools, the Universities, the Inns of Court and all scientific bodies who love a joke as much as a lecture. It will not remain stationary. It will not last for ever on the old jokes of which so much of its present existence is composed. It will never give up the well-worn jest that every Englishman is worth a dozen foreigners. It will never cease to believe that Britannia rules the waves. It will not give up the absurd impression that the British are calm and never influenced by sudden excitement. It will not be kept out of the most serious papers nor cease to appear in the most unlikely places.

So much about what the humour of to-morrow will not be. What it will be—with luck—is that it will continue the movement. It will have the satirical playfulness of an Anstey Guthrie, the exquisite self-consciousness of a Frank Burnand, the pungent parody of an Owen Seaman, and the delightful fun of a Jacobs.

And before and above all, the wits of the future will be cheery and light-hearted, setting down naught in malice, and doing their best to make this wicked world a little less wicked and a little happier. Each of them will be a good humourist—as I hope and trust I am myself.

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